

Witch's
Maiden



Mabel L. Tyrrell

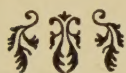


Laura Jane Mussor

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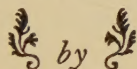
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WITCH'S MAIDEN

A HISTORICAL ROMANCE



MABEL L. TYRRELL
AUTHOR OF "CHESTNUT COURT"

Illustrations by

MARIE
LAWSON



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Witch's Maiden

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CHAPTER I

*How Temperance Farncombe Became the
Witch's Maiden*



THE STORY OF TEMPERANCE

Farncombe is strange, and the following narrative is a faithful account of those memorable years when the girl was familiarly known in the country of Sussex as the Witch's Maiden.

Destiny decreed that Temperance Farncombe should play her small part in the world's history during a period of great tribulation, when battle and antagonism were rife in Great Britain and

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the country divided into two bitterly opposed parties, the Royalists, and the supporters of Oliver Cromwell.

Temperance was never conscious of having formed an opinion with regard to the party to which she belonged; she was born a Royalist. From the moment her mind was capable of thought many and curious were the impressions which crowded in upon it, building up her character, fostering that courage and splendidly humble spirit which never deserted her during the years of her servitude to Mother Ursula Harbottle, the witch of the marshes. But before relating that part of the story it is necessary for the reader to know something of the childhood of Temperance Farncombe.

Temperance was nearly five years old when His Most Sacred Majesty of Blessed Memory, King Charles the First, was executed, and well did this little country child remember the month of January in the year of Grace 1649.

Her Mother, Dame Ales Farncombe, crept into her room one night and roused the little girl. Sitting up in her beautifully carved oak bed, Temperance blinked sleepily, and looked from her mother to her old nurse in inquisitive

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surprise; from them her eyes wandered to the shadowy crowd of maidservants hovering near the door. Dame Farncombe held a lantern in her hand, and the pale rays from the flickering candle flame fell upon her rich gown of purple silk, lighting up her dark hair and timid, gentle face, so different from the vividly energetic countenance of her little daughter. When she beheld them all standing there in her room at so unusual an hour the child could think of but one reason for their unexpected visit, and she quivered with delight.

"They have given the King back his crown!" she cried.

Her voice rang out joyfully, and in her gladness she stood up in bed, her long linen night-dress making her appear quite tall, and her thick golden hair fell over her brown eyes as she jumped up and down in a great state of excitement.

"No, there is no news concerning His Majesty," replied her mother, softly. "But we are going to welcome in the new year, Temperance, and I could not leave you up here alone."

The new year meant nothing to Temperance, whereas she imagined the King's crown to be a

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magical wreath of stars which wicked men had stolen from him, and although she experienced a little pang of disappointment upon learning that there was no news of the King, it soon vanished in the anticipation of some new adventure. Even at that early age the unknown appealed strongly to Temperance Farncombe.

So they put on her little black leather shoes, her tight-fitting bodice of scarlet velvet, and wrapped a blanket round her shoulders. Trotting along the dim passages where candles in silver sconces upon the walls cast a feeble glow over the magnificent portraits of her ancestors, Temperance cut a very odd little figure, for the embroidered linen nightdress which trailed down to her feet from beneath the tight waist of her velvet bodice looked ridiculous, and as she only grasped the blanket together at the throat it stretched out behind her like a train, threatening to upset the young waiting-maid who was following hard on her little mistress' flat, square heels.

"Will Annis Twisden see the new year?" asked Temperance as she stood shivering with excitement while her nurse and the young serv-

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ing-maid drew back the bolts of the huge front door.

There were no men-folk in Dame Farncombe's household as they had all joined the army or the King's fleet, therefore it was a small company of women who collected upon the threshold of Farncombe Hall to welcome in the new year. The scene which met the bright, inquisitive eyes of the little heiress of all these goodly acres of land which lay sleeping peacefully in the star-light caused her heart to beat rapidly. It was so strange at night! Would the new year come racing up from the sea, which, by straining her ears, she could hear crooning to itself on the marshes, or would it float down like a white gull from that black sky wreathed with stars like the King's crown? Her eyes sought to pierce through the darkness which hung over the garden, changing its familiar shape completely, and bending forward, she suddenly wondered whether the new year would come from the town under the sea. She knew all about that sunken city, for her father had told her how the sea had risen up and taken the ancient town of Winchelsea three hundred years previously, and swept it away from Sussex, but afterwards men had built

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a new Winchelsea, the one in which Temperance lived. So would the bells ring under the water, and the new year come bursting out like a rainbow? Oh, in that case she would not see it! She could not see the water from the threshold of Farncombe Hall, but Annis would see it. Temperance jumped with impatience, and remembered that no one had replied to her question regarding Annis. True, Annis was the daughter of a farmer who fought in Oliver Cromwell's army, therefore Temperance looked upon her with scorn when she met her in the lanes carrying a milking-stool, and, of course, she had never addressed the little girl, but she was amazingly interested in her, although it annoyed her to think that perhaps Annis would see the new year while several acres of land, and the bee garden, and the Church of Saint Thomas of Canterbury, and the hill, hid it from her own eyes.

"Will Annis Twisden see the new year?" she asked in a voice which demanded attention.

"Everyone will see it," replied Dame Farncombe.

"The King?"

"I—I sincerely hope so."

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"Even Jasper in Scotland?"

"Yes. Now we will sing an hymn, for midnight will be striking soon."

But no hymn echoed out from Farncombe Hall that night. Through the still air broke the clatter of galloping hoofs; nearer they came, and still nearer, till Temperance could have screamed with excitement when eventually they thundered up the drive to the Hall. The new year was riding in like a king on horseback! Temperance darted forward to meet it—but it was only her father.

Bitterly disappointed, she stood wistfully in the shadow and listened to the quick talk about her, striving to understand her father's anger, and while they all talked there together the new year came in unseen, unwelcomed, because the King was in great and terrible danger. They put Temperance to bed and she wept because it was all so disappointing, and she heard her father go galloping away into the night.

Then day after day she listened for the sound of horses hoofs, and on the last day of January her father came again. It was night, but Temperance heard him a long way off, and also the hurry of feet in the passage, but as nobody

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fetches her she got up by herself and made her way timidly in the darkness down to the hall door. It was wide open, and there was her mother weeping, and her father speaking with great sobs in his voice, and the maids clinging together like frightened sheep. Nobody took any notice of the little white figure listening so eagerly, and presently Temperance walked sadly away toward the bee garden.

She found it very cold, and thought the skeps looked strange in the night, nevertheless she felt obliged to tell the bees, for she was sure the others would forget to do so. Stooping down, she put her lips as close as possible to the little hole in the hive which the bees used as a door, and whispered:

"The King is dead. They cut off his head at Whitehall yesterday."

To each of the twelve hives she whispered the same message, hoping the bees would hear her in spite of their bad habit of going to sleep all the winter, for if the bees were not told of the King's death they would die before summer. Dame Cripplestone, Jasper's mother, had lost her bees because she had forgotten to tell them her brother had been killed in the wars, and

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Jasper had no honey with his bread in consequence. Colonel Coppleson would not buy more bees because there was nobody in his big house to look after them now; Temperance missed her little playmate sadly since he had gone to Scotland with his mother, and there was something very strange happening to the Colonel which she could not understand.

"Temperance! Where are you?"

It was her father's voice, and she could see his great shadowy figure looming between the bare trees.

"Here am I!" she cried.

Colonel Farncombe picked his little daughter up in his arms, wrapped his cloak around her, and strode away to the house.

"You are blue with cold," he said. "What were you doing?"

"Telling the bees that they have cut off the King's head," she replied. "What will they do with his crown now? Oh, 'tis a dreadful thing!"

"One day his crown will be placed upon the head of our new king."

"Oh, I am glad we have a new king! What is his name?"

"His name is King Charles the Second," re-

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plied Colonel Farncombe. "Now listen to what I have to say to you, Temperance."

He put her down upon the threshold of Farncombe Hall and her bright brown eyes looked up eagerly and lovingly into his stern soldier's face.

"Repeat after me—long live King Charles the Second."

Stiff as a young fir tree stood Temperance Farncombe, and her thin, sweet voice rang out in that silent garden.

"Long live King Charles the Second!"

"I will serve him through all adversity, and if needs be suffer disgrace for his sake."

"I will serve him through all ad-ver-si-ty and if needs be suffer disgrace for his sake."

No, it was not surprising that Temperance never forgot that month of January, 1649, and the month of September, 1651, lived alongside it in her memory. During that September her father was killed in the battle of Worcester, and the young, uncrowned king was obliged to flee his country. Hunted by Cromwell's soldiers, he escaped in a miraculous manner to Sussex, and took ship at Shoreham for France. Thus the attention of one of Cromwell's generals was

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drawn to the rich acres belonging to Colonel Farncombe, which now, by law, passed to a little maiden not yet seven years old. Now Colonel Farncombe had given Cromwell much trouble, so his land and what remained of his fortune were confiscated.

Dame Farncombe had died several months previously, therefore Temperance and a few serving-maids faced Cromwell's commissioner alone when he arrived unexpectedly to take over Farncombe Hall and publicly accuse the deceased Colonel of treason for having fought at Worcester for the common enemy, Charles Stuart.

It was midday when the commissioner and his soldiers arrived, and they presented such an unusual appearance in that lonely, decayed little town of Winchelsea that many people followed them in fear and trembling to the gates of Farncombe Hall. The population of the sea-forsaken little town consisted of a few ship-builders, farmers, and smugglers, Colonel Farncombe and Colonel Copplestone being the only two gentlemen of means for miles round; but as the former was no more, and the latter in London with his wife, where he had taken a high position

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in Cromwell's new government, Temperance waited alone to meet her father's enemies.

They had dressed her in her best gown of apple-green silk, and upon her thick golden curls she wore a black hat with a drooping white feather. In her hand she carried a riding-whip, and round her neck was a string of her mother's pearls. She was a tall child for her years, and fully aware of her position. Her mother was gone, her father fallen upon the field of battle, and she alone represented the Farncombes.

As she stood at the gates, listening to the tramp of soldiers coming up the hill, she did not weep for the loved ones she had lost, because her thoughts were too confused and she was too young to think of her future. She only flicked her little whip, and whispered to herself that Cromwell's soldiers should not have her land, her house, her bees who were buzzing so happily in the warm September sunshine. When the commissioner came into sight she looked with awe upon his unfamiliar uniform, so different from her father's elegant clothes, and she disliked the round, hard helmets worn by his soldiers.

"Who are you?" asked the general, but not unkindly.

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"Mistress Temperance Farncombe," piped the clear, thin voice.

"Kindly move aside, Mistress Temperance Farncombe, for I would enter and read the proclamation."

"Oliver Cromwell's troops shall not enter my gates."

The commissioner's face became grim; he gave an order, and so quickly did the soldiers march in through the gates that Temperance was obliged to skip out of the way hastily for fear of being trampled. With great dignity she walked to the threshold of the house, and stood there while the people of Winchelsea crowded into the garden, gaping at the soldiers and listening to the proclamation which the general read from a scroll of paper.

Temperance did not understand all that he was saying, but she heard her father called a traitor, and her king referred to as Charles Stuart, the common enemy, and that was sufficient to kindle the flame of anger which was smoldering in her heart.

"It is fortunate that I picked up my riding-whip in the hall," she thought, and without more ado she lashed it across the commissioner's face.

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But as the general was a tall man and only the end of the thong flicked his chin, she flung the whip at him, and the horn handle struck his nose. Great was the confusion that followed. The serving-maids ran away, terrified; many of the people of Winchelsea cheered, others cried "Shame!" and it looked very much as if the peaceful garden of Farncombe Hall would soon be the scene of a fierce, unequal fight.

"Bravo, Mistress Temperance!" shouted Annis Twisden, the farmer's daughter—and she a Roundhead and her own father in Cromwell's army, too.

"The little spitfire!" cried Dame Goody Pepper, the owner of the alehouse by the church. "Shame upon ye, Mistress Temperance!"

Then the men began fighting one another; many attacked the soldiers, and the commissioner, who was an impatient man and in a hurry to reach London, determined to teach Winchelsea a lesson by burning Farncombe Hall to the ground. That would cool the courage of these Sussex louts and show them in whose hand the power rested. His harsh voice issued a sharp command, a few shots were fired, and the only thing that Temperance could remember clearly

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after throwing her whip in the general's face was the brightness of the flames leaping from the great trusses of hay which had been thrown into the hall. Slender, sparkling points of flame which the wind blew out through the open door and which vanished into the sunshine like magic swords.

"They are burning my father's house!" cried Temperance when she realized the fact. "My little bed—my silver spoon—all the pictures ——"

And the flames certainly acted according to the general's speculations; so horrified were the people when they beheld the stately mansion clasped in the embrace of those golden flames which grew gradually to broad tongues of red fire, that they had not the heart to fight, nor the power to protest.

"Lordy! lordy! what will become of little Mistress Temperance?" wailed a voice from the crowd.

Aye, what would become of the child in the apple-green gown of stiff silk who wore her black hat with such indomitable pride? The commissioner asked if she had any relatives, and obtaining a reply in the negative, demanded to

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know who would take her in and give her a home until Parliament should decide what was to be done with her. But not a soul offered to befriend Temperance. The flames which were consuming Farncombe Hall and the treasures it contained were doing their work so well that those trembling people were in terror lest in giving shelter to the little lady they brought ruin upon their own heads.

Now upon the outskirts of the crowd, watching but silent, was a woman known as Mother Ursula Harbottle, the witch. True, witchcraft was condemned by the Church and by the Law, and all those found practicing magic were brought to court and tried as felons, but in this isolated spot Mother Ursula set her charms and sold her cures discreetly and without hindrance, notwithstanding the rumor that she had escaped from the famous witch-finder, Master Matthew Hopkins, and was obliged to hide in the country, as she dared not show her face in the towns.

Ursula Harbottle now came forward, and considering there was a reward of twenty shillings offered to anyone who denounced a witch, it spoke well for the woman's courage that there in the light of day, and in view of all the people,

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she offered to feed and shelter Temperance Farncombe for the time being.

"She is a witch! She is a witch!" screamed Temperance when she understood that she was expected to go away with Mother Ursula.

But the commissioner had no time to probe into the mysterious existence of the old woman who lived on the marshes, and was only too glad to rid his conscience of so troublesome a burden as little Mistress Temperance Farncombe, therefore he gave her to the witch, and commanded the woman to be kind to the child.

Screaming as lustily as any poor rat-catcher's daughter who had been whipped for stealing apples, Temperance disputed every inch of the way to the witch's abode. She lost her fine hat in the struggle, she tore her silken gown, but Mother Ursula's horny hand held hers firmly, and the old woman took no notice of the shrill cries, though she looked back over her shoulder from time to time at the red flames roaring and leaping in the clear sky.

And that is how Temperance Farncombe became the witch's serving-maid.

CHAPTER II

The Cottage on the Lonely Marsh



ATHER ye rosebuds while ye may;
Old Time is still a-flying,
And this same flower that smiles today
Tomorrow will be dying."

Clear as a bell rang the joyous voice of the young girl who was gathering wood on the sea-shore. No ordinary wood was this that she was tying into a great bundle, but the bone-white, salt-eaten harvest of the sea.

The girl stopped singing to examine a piece of

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timber which she picked out from a heap of refuse, and wondered from where it had come. It was part of an oaken beam which had once graced a mighty ship, and there it lay,—shattered, seared white with salt and sun, fuel to warm the poor in winter. The beam was too heavy to tie up with the bundle of dry sticks, therefore the girl knotted a stout cord round it and, placing the bundle upon her back, she wound the cord round her hand and, dragging the log behind her, walked over the sand toward a veritable field of great white pebbles and shingle.

With the exception of the gulls floating over the sea, and the girl with the joyous voice, there was no sign of life on that desolate shore. The town on the hill was concealed by a thick belt of trees, and all around lay the flat marshes, with here and there a ditch sparkling silver in the July sun.

Upon reaching the stretch of pebbles which she was obliged to cross the girl took a pair of broken leather shoes from a cord which hung round her neck, and put them on her feet. Feet, hands, and face were burnt a soft golden brown hue, and as the girl's clothes were black, and

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the close-fitting black hood upon her head concealed her hair, she presented a strange figure. She was tall and slender, and in spite of the fact that the bodice of her gown was much too large for her, and her voluminous skirt patched and stained with age, there was a little hint of coquetry about her. The coarse sacking apron was tied tightly at the waist, causing the skirt to bunch out in ample pleats, and the row of odd buttons down the front of the bodice were all neatly fastened. The full sleeves of her dress had been well brushed, for there was no dust in the heavy folds of cloth, but the cuffs fell over the girl's rough brown hands, and she was continually turning them back.

"Mercy me! how hot it is!" she murmured as she continued her way, regretting that she possessed but one gown, and that more suitable for winter than summer.

"Temperance! Drat the girl loitering there on the shore when I be in a hurry. Temperance!"

The harsh voice echoed over the marshes, and from behind a great bank of pebbles appeared the tall figure of Mother Ursula Harbottle. She also was garbed in shabby, patched black cloth,

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but beneath her steeple-crowned hat she wore a dirty white linen hood which fitted tightly round her ivory-tinted face. She was a dark woman with more than a suspicion of a mustache, and a few gray hairs upon her chin which the children called a witch's beard. Her eyes were as black as those of the raven who seldom quitted her side, but who now came hopping over the shingle, chattering angrily, and threatening the bare brown ankles of the girl with the wood.

"You lazy baggage, keeping me waiting when I be going to Rye on important business," cried Mother Ursula. "Gossiping down on the shore and wasting my time like that. What do I feed and clothe you for, Temperance Farncombe?"

Temperance tossed up her head and smiled at the stern old face.

"Let me count," she replied, holding up her hand and ticking off the items one after another on her fingers. "For cleaning the house; for gathering wood; for fetching water from the well; for washing clothes; for making the best rabbit stew in Sussex; for fetching clay from the priest's grave over Camber way to cure the toothache; for catching frogs at midnight; for ——"

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She could say no more, for Mother Ursula sprang down the bank of shingle with surprising agility and her horny hands boxed Temperance's ears with resounding force.

"The impertinence!" she cried. "I'll learn you how to speak to your betters, I will!"

"But I was not gossiping, mistress," answered Temperance, rubbing the side of her head tenderly. "Not a soul have I seen on the shore, not a sail on the sea, and me gathering wood since dawn and keeping watch for you."

"Silence, girl!" commanded Mother Ursula. "When will you learn that the wind and the stones have ears?—aye, and the very grass on the marshes, for that."

Temperance pursed up her red lips and shook her apron at Richard, the raven, who was in one of his bad tempers; he took his cue from the tone of his mistress's voice, and acted accordingly. There had been a time when Temperance feared Richard more than anything on earth, for it was said that he was the witch's familiar and through him she worked her spells, but nine years of close intimacy with the raven and Mother Ursula had cured her terror of both,

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and now she was so accustomed to her strange life that she ceased to think of it as unusual.

Still rubbing her cheek, she scrambled up the bank with the wood on her back, but she lowered her voice to a whisper as she recounted her morning's work to her mistress.

"I was out at dawn," she said, "and all I saw was Master Jeremy Twisden driving sheep toward Rye, and later on Colonel Copplestone shooting wheatears for his dinner. No boat came in, and none went out, mistress. Does a ship ever put in at Winchelsea these days? Are we not deserted by the sea, and left high and dry—forgotten by land and wave?"

Her brown eyes turned in the direction of the little town now abandoned by the sea, which had gone back some two or three miles, and she smiled to think that stately ships had once sailed upon the green marshes stretching before her.

"We might as well be living in the poor drowned city, for all the world cares about us," she laughed.

Mother Ursula shivered; in common with most witches, she had a horror of water, and necessity alone drove her to a home so near the sea; so she changed the subject quickly.

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"I was not asking what you thought, Temperance, but what you saw," she said. "Now I be going to Rye, and you are to stay in the cottage till I return. No going out beyond the garden."

"Yes, mistress."

"And if any folk should come during my absence, be discreet and speak as little as possible. 'Tis a bridle you require, on your tongue."

"Yes, mistress."

"Should Dame Goody Pepper send to fetch ointment for her rheumatism, you can sell some, but set no charm."

"I never do. And there be no more ointment."

"You should have told me before, you scatter-brain! Go and skim chickweed from the ditch and boil it with the elder leaves. You know the proportions?"

"Yes, mistress—but there be the bone of the haddock which we ate for dinner a week ago. I have preserved it carefully, and I think it better for rheumatism than a chickweed poultice. Did it not lie between Christ's fingers when He drew the haddock out of the sea, and are not all haddock marked with that holy brand?"

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Methinks there is more virtue in a haddock bone than in chickweed."

"I told you to set no charms and mind your own business! Giving me your advice and your thoughts. If you lay a finger on the haddock bone I will put a curse on you."

"There, there, mistress! I cannot help it if I have an opinion. When will you return?"

"When it pleases me."

Turning abruptly, Mother Ursula walked away over the marshes, with Richard flapping in a lopsided fashion beside her, sometimes soaring above her high hat, sometimes perching upon her shoulder, but chattering in his uncouth voice the whole time, and throwing a vindictive backward glance at Temperance now and again.

Disembarrassing herself of the wood, the girl stretched up her arms to the sky, threw back her hood, then ran swiftly to the cottage on the marsh which was sheltered from the sea by a great bank of pebbles. So elegant and light were all her movements that when she ran she resembled some creature of the air clad in the heavy garments of the earth, and her feet, in the coarse, broken shoes, seemed to spurn the ground. The

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song which burst from her smiling lips was strange, too.

“No will-o'-th'-wisp mislight thee;
Nor snake, or slowworm bite thee;
But on, on thy way,
Not making a stay,
Since ghost there's none to affright thee.”

Was she not free for the whole day? The sun shone, the lark mounted high over the marshes, and the cruel winter with its hardships was forgotten in the joy of summer. In the little herb garden marked off from the marsh by a low fence of salt-eaten, lichen-tufted stakes Temperance halted, and craned her neck in the direction which Mother Ursula was pursuing. Was she out of sight?

“Her eyes are not so good as they used to be,” laughed the girl. “Nevertheless, she will not really mind if she sees,” and entering the cottage she went to a tiny room at the back and looked through a hole in the wall, neatly patched up with clay, which served as a window.

Upon the floor of beaten earth was a mattress stuffed with dry fern, a table on which all Temperance's worldly possessions lay in neat rows, and from the rough stone wall hung an odd

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assortment of clothing—a black cloak, a cow-hide, thick stockings knitted from remnants of black, gray, and red worsted, and on a peg by itself was a white linen bonnet, much mended, but spotless. Taking a ragged white cloth which she used for her toilet, Temperance hooked it over a nail and pushed the fluttering ends out of the window, where they swayed gently in the breeze.

This done, she sighed contentedly, went into the only other room, which was large and served as kitchen, storeroom, bedroom, and any other sort of room required by Mother Ursula, and took a hunch of rye bread from the big, wooden cupboard. Eating hungrily, she eyed a certain earthenware jar with some envy, for she dearly liked its contents, but was forbidden to partake of the fragrant beverage which Mother Ursula concocted from a strange little brown berry that had recently made its appearance in England. Temperance suspected her mistress of obtaining the berries from the smugglers who brought them from France, and after much judicious questioning she had learned that the delicious drink was called coffee, and deemed a deadly poison by many. Mother Ursula, being a witch,

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was immune from poison, and once or twice on a bitter winter's night she had cast a charm into the coffee which permitted Temperance to partake of it without danger, but great as the girl's courage was, she would not have dared to drink from that earthenware jar during her mistress' absence.

"I will gather the chickweed before I clean the house," she thought, and taking a bucket from the hearth, she ran down to the ditch which threaded its way over the marshland.

As she skimmed the green and slimy weed from the top of the stagnant water she glanced toward a little knot of trees in the distance over which a gray swirl of smoke was rising up into the still air. Behind those trees was a comfortable farmhouse, a goodly field of rye, an orchard, rich pasture land, cocks and hens, sheep and cows, comfort in winter, plenty in summer, but all forbidden ground to Temperance Farncombe.

Farmer Twisden would not allow the witch's maiden to set foot on his land, for, like many others, he was afraid of her. Since Parliament had forgotten her down there on the marshes, had she not learned all the witch's spells and

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could she not bewitch his pigs and his horse if she felt so inclined? Many times had Master Jeremy Twisden been upon the point of denouncing Mother Ursula and claiming the twenty shillings reward, but fear held him back; Mother Ursula knew something concerning Jeremy Twisden which, if revealed, would soon clap him into prison, or, more likely, send him out of the country as a slave, for many prisoners were sold as slaves to the colonists going to America. Therefore Jeremy kept his mouth shut and turned a blind eye upon the strange things which took place at the cottage on the marsh.

When her bucket was half full of chickweed Temperance rose from her knees and walked back to the cottage, her eyes scanning the grass for dandelions. She found several luscious roots in the stony ground which was piled against the fence, and these she pulled up and carried into the cottage with the intention of making them into a salad to eat with her meal of beans and rye bread.

She was lighting a fire upon the open hearth when a shadow fell across the floor, and a soft voice whispered:

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"Be she gone, Temperance?"

"Annis! How quick you have been. Yes, she be gone for all day."

"Aye, I had a mind that she would go out today, and I was watching for the signal. My, what a smell there be here!"

"'Tis coffee; my mistress must have made it for her meal before she left."

"Mercy me! Does she drink it? My father called at 'The Four Alls' for a pint of ale two evenings since, and Goody Pepper persuaded him to take a pipkin of coffee. Being attracted by the smell, he drank it, but it inconvenienced him most shameful. Never a wink of sleep did he have that night, but evil dreams troubled him; and learning that Dame Pepper had bought a charm from Mother Ursula to put in the coffee, he was sore afraid and almost decided to go and see Parson Dixwell. 'Tis a wicked poison, Temperance."

"Maybe. But come in while I boil the chickweed."

Annis Twisden entered the cottage cautiously; she was a trim, pretty young maid, much shorter than Temperance, and, for her station in life, elegantly attired. Many a time had Master

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Jeremy Twisden whipped his daughter in the hope of curing her of her leaning toward fine feathers, for he was a Puritan; but even in her working gown of dark-gray worsted Annis presented a very pleasing appearance. The white linen cap which surrounded her plump little face was exquisitely embroidered, her ankles were trim, for she knitted her stockings with care, and on Sundays she wore broad-toed, flat-heeled shoes with steel buckles. Today, however, her shoes were of the useful order, but her large apron was as white as a snowdrift.

"There be nothing to harm me here, Temperance?" she asked, anxiously, as she tripped toward the hearth.

"Nothing. Richard has gone with Mother Ursula."

"And Phineas, the white mouse?"

"He be in her pocket. Annis, you do provoke me sometimes! Would I hang the cloth out of the window to show you that I am alone if there were anything to harm you here? Are you not my only friend? The only person who speaks kindly to me and treats me as an ordinary girl and not as the witch's maiden? Would I reward

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your friendship to me, a poor outcast, by allowing misfortune to fall upon you?"

"'Tis only my own silly fear, Temperance! But Mother Ursula threatened to curse me once, and I have no desire to be overlooked by her evil eye. Something strange happened at our house last night, and I am bursting with impatience to tell you."

"Shut the door fast—nay, better leave it open, for then we can see across the marsh. Tell me quick!"

"A young man came to see my father."

"To ask your hand, maybe!" Annis was a year older than Temperance.

"To ask my hand, indeed! He was a man of birth. I do not know his name, and my father sent me to bed to prevent me from seeing him, therefore I knew that the business was important. They spoke of His Late Highness, and the most illustrious Lord Richard."

"You mean Oliver Cromwell and his poor son who cannot carry on his father's abominations with success!"

"Call him what you like. I mean the Lord Protector, who—alas for us all—is dead. Goodness knows what the country will come to with-

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out him. There now, Temperance, if you go flouting off in a temper because I mention His Highness, how can I tell you of the young man?"

"Of a truth it would be impossible," smiled Temperance, dryly, and reseating herself on the floor near the hearth. "I hope he will prove sufficiently interesting to reward my forbearance of that detestable name. My poor country—ruled by a band of disreputable soldiers. Mother Ursula has been told that there were cheers from the crowd when the magnificent funeral procession of the Lord Protector passed."

Annis shrugged her shoulders, but refrained from discussing the painful subject on which she and her friend never agreed. Seating herself on a stool facing Temperance, who was stirring the chickweed over the blazing wood fire, she assumed the discreet, confidential attitude necessary for the telling of startling news.

CHAPTER III

Unexpected Visitors



AS THEY SAT ON EITHER side of the leaping wood fire with the sunshine slanting in upon them like a broadsword, the contrast between Temperance Farncombe and Annis Twisden was striking.

Annis in her neat clothes, her pretty round face aglow with a peachlike bloom, little braids of dark hair drawn demurely from beneath the snowy whiteness of her tightly fitting bonnet, was symbolic of the prosperous farmer's daugh-

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ter, while nobody could mistake Temperance for anything else save a beggar maid. But an unusual beggar maid, and one likely to attract many a backward glance.

"Methinks my father was expecting the young man," said Annis. "Yesterday he was more irritable than usual, and when the unexpected knock sounded at the door last night he jumped like a frog, and told me that most likely it was some one come to see about his pension—which, you know, is never paid. He opened to the visitor himself, and took the young man into the parlor, where he keeps his accounts. Returning to the kitchen, he told me to go to bed."

"Then how do you know the visitor was a young man?" asked Temperance.

"Because I saw him and heard his voice!" cried Annis. "As I went to see that all was well in the dairy I heard a voice in the parlor saying, 'The Council of State has committed many officers to the Tower on suspicion of treason,' and although I was burning to listen at the key-hole, I went into the dairy and, having only a rushlight in my hand, I stumbled over the milk-cans, which made a great clatter."

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"And your father came running out of the parlor," laughed Temperance.

"Exactly," nodded Annis, demurely. "Meanwhile I had dropped the rushlight, and returning to the kitchen for a tallow candle, I perceived the young man standing in the parlor, but, alas! his back was toward me.

"He might have been quite old—one of the late Cromwell's brutal militia commissioners come to see that no stranger has settled among us recently," said Temperance. "'Tis always to your father or Colonel Copplesone that the commissioners apply for information when, perchance, they remember the existence of this forsaken place."

"He was neither!" cried Annis. "His hair was brown, cropped short, it is true, but he was not one of us. By his black coat, broad lace collar, and top-boots of soft buff leather I judged him to have come from London, and his voice carried authority. Maybe he is a secretary to a member of Parliament. Nevertheless, that is not the point—the mystery is that he did not leave our house last night, yet he is not there today."

"Your father is hiding him?" breathed Temperance, eagerly.

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"I am obliged to think so, yet my father went with the sheep to market this morning, and although I have searched every corner of the farm, I find no trace of the stranger. Nevertheless, there is a cheese missing from the dairy, and the rabbit pasty has become considerable smaller during the night. Yet why should a Roundhead need protection?"

"The times are very unsettled; battle and bloodshed everywhere, so I hear. Maybe there is some suspected plot on foot."

"In Winchelsea? Fie, Temperance. There is nobody of sufficient importance here to assist that common intrigant, Charles Stuart, to return and set his heel on us."

In an instant Temperance was on her feet, her brown eyes blazing with wrath, her rough hand pointing imperiously toward the door.

"If you cannot speak respectfully of His Majesty the King, go!" she cried.

"Hush, Temperance!" whispered Annis, her face blanching. "You know not who may be passing by. The young man may be a spy—or—or——Temperance, 'twas for this reason I came today to warn you. Perchance he is a witch-finder! Oh, be careful, my sweet friend! Should

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he hear you speaking thus of Charles Stuart, most likely he would have you ducked in the pond to try you, or maybe whipped in the stocks to see if you have tears. I beg you to be discreet."

So earnest was the soft voice of Annis Twisden that the anger died in Temperance's face, and putting her arms round her friend's neck she bent and kissed her.

"I am no witch," she murmured. "I have tears like any other girl, but I would not shed them if they tried me with pins or whips. And I thank you for warning me concerning the stranger, Annis; indeed I will be discreet, for I have no wish to be ducked in the pond."

"He may be a spy; there are many about. It is so solitary a place that a man might cross to France without being seen. Now I must go."

"Annis! So soon? I thought you would stay till dusk."

"And my cows to milk, and my new dairy maid to assist with the butter!" laughed Annis, moving toward the door. "One would think I was a fine lady with nothing to do all day. Besides, should my father learn that I have seen you, he might be suspicious, therefore I must

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get back before he returns. I will come again as soon as I can, sweet."

Temperance walked with her friend as far as the ditch, over which Annis jumped gracefully; then the witch's maiden returned to the cottage and set about cleaning up the hearth. Her face was very thoughtful. Had not Mother Ursula sent her out at dawn to keep a watch on the shore? Was it possible that her mistress was aware of the stranger's presence at Jeremy Twisden's farm? A very unsociable man was Jeremy Twisden since he had been pensioned out of the army with a hole in his forehead, and Temperance would walk a mile rather than encounter him, for he would call his dogs to heel when he saw her, or, if he were on horseback, ride swiftly on lest she should cast the evil eye upon his beast.

"If there is mischief in the air, Mother Ursula will know it," thought Temperance as she swept the floor with a bundle of reeds. "Oh, is there no strong man who will rise up and beg the King to return to his own? Oliver Cromwell dead, his son a poor nincompoop with no abilities, and the country going from bad to worse for want of a ruler. And suppose a worse than Old Copper

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Nose should arise? What will become of us? My poor —— Mercy upon me! Who be this coming up the garden? Of a truth my eyes must be seeing askew."

Her sight, however, was faultless, and overcoming her surprise and the emotion which wrung her heart, she stepped up to the door and beheld Colonel Copplestone with his gun on his shoulder, and a bunch of little brown birds hanging from a string in his hand.

A very stern man was Colonel Copplestone since he had forsaken the Royalist cause to become an adherent of the late Protector of the Commonwealth. Temperance despised him for having turned traitor, and since the death of Cromwell he had hung up his sword in the hall of his old manor house, and taken to the plough instead. But his son Jasper was in the Round-head army, and at the battle of Dunkirk, when that town had been taken from the Spaniards by the English and French, it was known in Winchelsea that young Jasper Copplestone had been promoted on the battlefield, and much honored as a coming general. Considering these facts, it was small wonder that Temperance

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Farncombe had no love for her father's old friend, nor for the playmate of her early youth.

Standing there at the cottage door, Temperance made no obeisance to the big, burly man in untidy dress, and tall, steeple-crowned hat.

"I wish to speak with Ursula Harbottle," said Colonel Copplestone, in his harsh, commanding voice.

"She is not here, sir," replied Temperance.

"Not here? Then where is she?"

"I know not, Your Honour."

So angry was the Colonel at this response that he glanced suspiciously at Temperance and, for the moment, knew not what to say. If he ever thought of the witch's maiden as the gentle-born daughter of a gallant soldier and a great lady, he quickly dismissed the unpleasant fact from his mind and persuaded himself that the girl was far better off than many others. Mercy on us! with her face, and her willful ways, and her firebrand talk, she would most certainly lose her head on Tower Hill were she free and had she remained in that station of life to which she was born. Far better that she should remain a witch's serving-maid. The very worst that could befall her was a ducking in the pond, and that

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was preferable to being sold as a slave to the American colonists or flung into prison. So the Colonel cleared his throat, and because he was a trifle afraid of the tall young maiden, he spoke with exceeding harshness and authority.

"Be good enough to give a message to your mistress, my girl," he said. "I have had my eye on Mother Ursula for many a long day, and if she plays any of her evil tricks here I'll have her clapped into prison and tried as a witch. I have enough evidence to hang her—selling charms and putting the evil eye on poor helpless cattle. Tell her that I have been appointed commissioner, and if she shelters any stranger or befriends any mutineer who tries to escape by sea to the common enemy, Charles Stuart, I will arrest her and string her by the neck to yonder gateway."

He pointed over the marshes towards the hill and the old gateway leading to Winchelsea, then turned away and, unheeding the path, trampled through the herbs in the garden, his huge, heavy top-boots crushing the tender leaves and causing a fragrant perfume of thyme, mint, and vervain to waft delicately by on the warm air.

Unperturbed by the threats with which she

was familiar, Temperance was, nevertheless, disturbed and puzzled, but she put a strong bridle on her tongue and remembered Mother Ursula's injunctions. She waited till the Colonel was striding across the marshes, then she bent tenderly over the bruised herbs, lifting them gently, stripping them of their maimed sprigs, whispering to them.

"'Tis hard enough to get you to grow at all," she murmured, "with the wind and the sea against me. In one moment he has spoiled months of labor. If Mother Ursula puts a curse upon him 'twill not surprise me. The traitor! And there is no redress for such as us. Aye, Master Coplestone, but for all your cleverness you have given a mighty secret to me. Of a truth there is some one in hiding hereabouts; a true and loyal subject of the King methinks, and if by chance he crosses my path all the witch ponds in England will not prevent me from helping him, whether it be with spells, magic, or common sense!"

Alert, tense, with the flame of the patriot burning in her, Temperance stood among the trampled herbs and endeavored to connect the information Annis had given her with the unex-

pected visit of Colonel Copplestone. In her mind she was certain that Jeremy Twisden and Colonel Copplestone were searching for the same person, and that the young man at the farm was a spy sent from London, therefore the matter must be one of grave import.

"And they will not neglect the witch's cottage when looking for him," she thought. "Let them come. The more the merrier, and from their inquiries I shall learn much. I will relate this day's happenings faithfully to my mistress, and perchance she will take me into her confidence, because it could not have been an idle whim of hers which sent me at dawn to gather wood and keep an eye upon the shore."

During the afternoon Temperance worked restlessly in cottage and garden, and as dusk fell she scanned the marshes anxiously, but never a human figure did she see. When darkness fell upon the land, and the sea rumbling among the pebbles was the only sound in that desolate spot, Temperance became agitated and wondered what had befallen Mother Ursula. When she went abroad on these mysterious excursions she always returned to her abode at twilight, and Temperance had never known her to remain

out so late during all the years she had spent at the cottage.

"At night the marsh is so treacherous," thought the girl. "True, Richard will warn her of the ditches, but he cannot save her from falling into a hole. And the moon is so young and the feeble light she sheds is obscured by the clouds. Dearie me! I wish she would come home."

To pass the time Temperance unbraided her hair, and cut the ends by the light of a lantern. Her hair was her one pride, and great was the care she bestowed upon it. When the moon waxed she cut the ends of her abundant tresses, but nothing would have induced her to cut them when the moon was on the wane. Mother Ursula had taught her that all growing things, such as plants, trees, hair, and nails, should only be cut when the moon was on the increase, otherwise they would waste and die. So Temperance cut her hair when the moon was young, and the treatment proved very satisfactory. Like ropes of fine gold thread her hair fell in waving strands about her slender shoulders, and she chipped it with a pair of clumsy scissors. Very rebellious hair it was, falling in curls over her

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eyes, and it sprang back like wire when she released it from the scissors. Many were the disputes between Temperance and Mother Ursula concerning that golden hair, for the girl would throw back her hood whenever possible, revealing those unruly locks which, in spite of tight braiding, escaped in curls upon her forehead and neck, calling forth a torrent of rebukes from the witch, who considered it unmaidenly to display the hair.

As she knelt beside the table on which the lantern glowed, Temperance heard a faint sound, as of a hand passing over the door in search of the latch, and without thought she sprang up and flung the door open, expecting to see Mother Ursula upon the threshold.

Now if Temperance was surprised, the young man standing there in the darkness was doubly so, and for a moment he could not speak. He gazed upon the young maiden with awe, and maybe a little fear. The lantern on the table behind her cast a curious light around her, touching the edges of her hair and turning them into a nebulous glow of pale gold, while it intensified the sable blackness of her ragged gown. White and misty were her hands and face, and she

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stood as still as the rocks upon the seashore. The young man had expected a witch, but not this beautiful apparition which fairly took his breath away. From behind his black mask his eyes stared out in amazement.

"Are you Ursula Harbottle?" he murmured.

"No; I am her serving-maid."

"I would speak with Mother Ursula."

"She is not at liberty."

"I will wait until she can see me."

"That will be tomorrow morning."

There was a pause during which Temperance strove to discern the eyes which moved behind the black mask that almost covered the man's face, and her mind made note of his tall, thin figure, broad shoulders, high hat, and in her anxiety she forgot how strange a figure she must appear with her hair hanging in such confusion about her. A hundred questions were upon her tongue, but she spoke not one of them.

"Tomorrow is still uncertain, but tonight I have the toothache," said that agreeable voice at last. "I would buy a cure for the toothache."

"Rub it with salt till tomorrow morning."

"Nay, 'tis tonight that I need a cure."

"Then you must go elsewhere for it."

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"I pray you, maiden, beg Mother Ursula to receive me. I am in agony with a wisdom tooth that has come late in life."

Temperance shut the door upon him and retreated across the room, her broken shoes flapping upon the floor, and she whispered into the hearth, then caved in the voice of Richard the raven. The harsh voice of the witch's familiar was a great protection to a lonely girl! Her heart was beating madly as she opened the door again. Was the stranger a friend or an enemy? The spy of whom Annis had spoken, or the fugitive for whom Colonel Coplestone was searching?

"Mother Ursula will not see you till tomorrow," she said, resolutely. "'Tis useless to stand there begging admittance, and she has no faith in your toothache. Men with the toothache come to buy cures by the light of day, and not by the light of the moon."

"Maiden, are you a friend? Long live the King!"

Temperance gripped hold of the doorpost, but, fearing a trap of some kind, she bit back the words which sprang to her lips, and did not speak till her voice was well under control.

"Good night, master," she said, closing the

door. "Mistress! The young man will not go; he has his foot on the step! Be off, I say! Return with the light of day if you will, but be off at this time of a night!"

Not wishing to disclose the fact that Mother Ursula was absent, Temperance was in a quandary, and as she pressed the door with all her strength against the young man's boot she heard Richard come chattering through the window of her little room.

"Hi, Richard!" she called, heaving a sigh of relief.

The raven knew what was expected of him; one prod from that fierce and powerful beak caused the young man to withdraw his foot, and Temperance bolted the door.

"What time shall I come tomorrow?" whispered the voice, angrily. "If Mother Ursula does not receive me 'twill be all the worse for her. I prefer the night to the day."

Making no more sound than a bat flickering in the air, Temperance darted to the window of her room and put her ear close to Mother Ursula's lips.

"Tomorrow at midnight," whispered those lips.

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Back fluttered the witch's maiden, and her voice was full of laughter as it wafted out through the tiny hole beneath the great oaken latch of the cottage door to the young man still lingering on the step.

"You must endure your toothache till tomorrow at midnight, master," she murmured. "Do not forget that salt rubbed well in is deemed most efficacious!"

CHAPTER IV

The Man With the Bear



EMPERANCE stood by the cottage door, listening intently to Mother Ursula's instructions, and pouting a trifle petulantly. There was a big basket of watercress on her arm, and little bunches of herbs in her hand.

"Yes, I am to work in the dark," nodded the girl. "To spy and report, but never a word of confidence do you give me."

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"That is not true, you impertinent little slut," retorted Mother Ursula. "You could hang me tomorrow if you would."

"But you know I would not."

Temperance looked up into the hard old face that she so seldom succeeded in softening into a smile, and as her brown eyes met the cold regard of Mother Ursula it was visible that there existed a secret understanding between them. Aye, more than an understanding—a bond that welded them together as firmly as the tie which unites two men of the same country who meet in a foreign land. They differed in character, in manners, and in opinions, yet the bond forced them to stand side by side and to support one another in time of trouble. And it was a silent bond; never had it been spoken in words, but often with the eyes as at this moment. Then Temperance looked away, sighing a little, lifting her shoulders with a movement of impatience.

"The time goes very slow today," she said. "I would it were midnight that I might learn what secret a cure for the toothache carries with it."

"'Twill go quicker if you hurry about your business," replied Mother Ursula. "I blush for

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shame, Temperance, when I think of you standing as you did last night with your hair unbraided before a stranger. You have no modesty. When I was a young girl maidens were not so bold, and I know not what you will come to with your new-fashioned ways and your pert tongue."

"I flatter me my tongue was worthy of your teaching yesterday, mistress," laughed the girl, and she skipped out of the way hastily to escape the hard hand that was raised against her.

"Remember that a woman is a basket full of eyes," called Mother Ursula as her serving-maid tripped across the marches over which proud ships had once sailed.

With the tender stalk of a stunted marsh clover between her teeth, and her eyes searching for the larks which she could hear in the blue sky but not always see, Temperance went hurrying along, splashing through the sluggish ditches for the pleasure of feeling the cool water ooze over her feet, and thinking of the stranger in the black mask with whom she had conversed the previous evening. Had he thought her unmaidenly with her hair unbound? Well, if he had she could not help it, but by dint of thinking about it she became quite angry with the young

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man for having placed her in a position which could be criticized.

"After all," she thought, "there is some consolation in being a witch's maiden, for it matters not one wit what I do or say, or how I appear. Nothing is expected of me but ill luck! Maybe the young man is cursing me today for some accident of which I am unaware. How I should like to know whether he is in hiding at Jeremy Twisden's farm. Shall I go in and beg for a drink of the buttermilk which they give to the pigs? I would not inconvenience Annis, yet I am greatly tempted to run the risk of Master Twisden's whip."

By the time she reached the white gate of the little homestead which snuggled behind the clump of trees on the edge of the marsh Temperance decided to walk boldly round to the dairy, hoping to see Annis, but in her friend's place she beheld a young serving-maid skimming milk.

Hastily the serving-maid twisted the three rings which she wore upon her finger to protect her from hobgoblins, and wished she were in any other place but the dairy. Dairies were the favorite abode of mischievous spirits, but even

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the three rings which the girl had bought in secret from Mother Ursula to protect her while carrying out her duties were useless against the evil eye which many folk swore the witch's maiden possessed. Praying silently that Temperance would not harm her, the girl asked her what she desired.

"A drink of buttermilk," replied Temperance. "It is very hot today and the brooks are nearly dried up."

Hoping to get rid of the unwelcome visitor, the girl handed her a bowl of skimmed milk and told her not to set foot in the dairy.

"If you turn the milk sour you will hear more of it," she said, severely, looking with great distaste at the bare brown feet of the witch's maiden on which the mud from the ditch and little patches of chickweed were drying.

Temperance laughed softly, her merriment bubbling like a brook, but as she emptied the bowl Jeremy Twisden, leading a cow, came striding toward her, and his face purpled with rage when he beheld her. To the cow's horns was tied a bunch of vervain to protect her from witches and fairies, therefore Jeremy Twisden was not afraid for the beast, but so enraged was

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he to perceive the witch's maiden thus close to his dairy that he lashed out with his whip which caught her ankles, and caused her to utter a sharp cry of pain.

"You witch!" he shouted. "Be off or I'll duck you in my pond!"

"You dare to call me witch!" screamed Temperance. "There was a man in Salisbury fined twenty pounds for calling a maiden witch and ducking her. Aye, Master Twisden, 'tis not so easy to duck a witch these days, and if I was to have you up next Assizes for threatening me, there's no knowing what else I might bring against you."

She had the satisfaction of seeing his face pale, and he put his hand up quickly to the bandage round his head which hid the hole in his forehead, and keeping well out of the range of his whip, Temperance ran along before him, throwing an apt remark over her shoulder now and again while he drove her off his land. Only when he called to his dogs did she take to her heels, and then she sped like the wind, her brown feet making no sound upon the earth, and her black voluminous skirts billowing out behind her. Great is the power which lies in the knowl-

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edge of one's limitations! Temperance would have raced any youth in the fair county of Sussex, but she had no intention of pitting her fleetness of foot against Jeremy Twisden's dogs. Not until she had crossed the fields and found herself in the winding pathway which skirted Colonel Copplestone's land did she pause, then she sat down close to the ripening rye to cool.

"My, how hot it is!" she reflected rubbing her face with her old sacking apron, and when she had arranged the tossed bundles of watercress in the basket, and pushed the little stray curls back under her hood of rusty black cloth, she continued her way.

"My first attempt useless," she thought, and she ticked it off on her fingers, a habit she had learned from Mother Ursula. "I wish I knew what Master Twisden fears from us. I tell my mistress everything, but still she treats me with suspicion."

It was a good walk to the little town forsaken by the sea, and up the hill toiled Temperance—that same hill down which she had been dragged inch by inch some years back. But she had mounted the hill so many times since that; the memory of the child in the green silk dress had

faded, though never could she forget the flames bursting from her father's house. She turned her head away from the wooded bank, as if fearing to see the red tongues of fire staining the sky, and looked out to the sea lying like a flat gray band down on the shore, with little white ruffles breaking silently all along the edge.

"No ships in the channel," she murmured. "No sound of guns today."

Now the town on the hill had been planned by King Edward the First to take the place of the sunken one, but it had never prospered. Its broad, straight roads and important squares appeared out of place with regard to the poor buildings. True, the lovely Church of Saint Thomas was imposing, and as Temperance skirted round the churchyard where a few sheep lay in the shade of the trees she perceived several people running in the direction of Dame Goody Pepper's alehouse, "The Four Alls."

A beautiful little inn was "The Four Alls," with a great wistaria clinging to its old walls, and wooden benches placed invitingly in the sun. Goody Pepper had taken down the brightly painted sign because it caused much trouble, but in spite of many different political opinions the

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alehouse was still known by its old name, "The Four Alls"—the king rules all, the parson prays for all, the soldier fights for all, and the country-man ploughs for all.

Children clinging to their mothers' skirts, young fishermen and maidens, the apothecary's prim daughter, all appeared pleasantly excited that morning, and called merrily to one another as they ran, but never a word did they address to the witch's maiden. But Temperance ran with them, and before the alehouse door she perceived a man with a bear. A little crowd was collected around him, and the bear danced with such an odd mixture of grace and clumsiness that Temperance laughed outright, her merriment pealing forth unrestrained, and in her eagerness to see better she pushed her way to the front. Then suddenly the bear made a lunge toward her basket of watercress, and she screamed.

"Pull him back, master!" she cried. "Mercy me! Would he eat me?"

She had never seen a live bear before, and the great shaggy creature walking on his hind legs interested her so keenly that she did not take

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much notice of the man who led it by a heavy chain.

"Of a truth you would make a dainty meal," laughed the man, tugging the bear into the center of the circle. "And now, my masters and mistresses, listen to my story and learn why a brave soldier—aye, and sailor, too—is obliged to tramp from town to town, trusting to a wild beast to earn him an honest penny because the successors of His Highness the Lord Protector forget to pay him his pension of two shillings a week. Look at my wounds—my left arm robbed of all strength, and me, fit for nothing but soldiering, turned adrift to the mercy of an ungrateful country."

Flinging open his ragged old buff leather coat, which was fastened together in front by a leather lace pushed through holes, the man exposed his shoulder, seared with many sword wounds and the scar of a bullet. Then he went on to relate his adventures, recounting the battles in which he had fought, telling how he had crossed the ocean to New England, fighting the Dutch all the way, and now that he was useless to his country he had been obliged to leave Chatham, where sick seamen were cared for, because

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he had no desire to starve in company with many others whose pensions had fallen into arrears.

He worked himself up into a great state of excitement, tossing back his head, striking his limp arm with his one strong hand, and all the time the great dusty bear ambled beside him, gentle as any dog.

"Is it worth it, my friends?" he shouted. "Reduced to beggary while the gentlemen of Whitehall feast on the best! And is this the England I knew in my boyhood? No! Where is your liberty? Horseracing forbidden lest a disturbance be created. Militia commissioners with the power to burn down your houses—aye, and hang you without a trial. You cannot even worship as you please, your theaters are closed, and do you but mention the name of the common enemy, Charles Stuart, you be lucky if you are not clapped into prison. For many years I have fought gallantly for right, but, by Saint George, give me back a king if this is all the Republicans can do for me!"

The country yokels were agape with amazement, one or two of the older folk began to ask the man questions, but Dame Goody Pepper came hurrying from the open door of the ale-

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house and ordered the soldier to be off. Dame Pepper wanted no disturbance, but as the man began protesting violently, saying that she had given him leave to make the bear dance and now refused to allow him to collect a few coins, she ordered him to go around to the back of the inn, and promised him a meal. Dame Pepper's sharp ears had detected the sound of hoofs on the road, and, sure enough, Colonel Coplestone rode into sight just as the beggar moved away. The Colonel halted, and demanded why a crowd had collected.

"To see a bear dance, Your Honor," replied Dame Pepper. "A poor discharged sailor from Chatham be wandering through the town."

A stanch supporter of the Roundheads was Dame Pepper, therefore Colonel Coplestone rode on, and the hostess of "The Four Alls" dispersed the little crowd, but she could not extinguish the agitation which the bear leader had kindled. Like a spark it flew from one to another; some condemned the man, most upheld him, and Annis Twisden came running to Temperance all aflutter with excitement.

"Speaking of Charles Stuart all openly like that, Temperance! Will they put him into

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prison? Such a handsome man with gold rings in his ears! For shame to treat a soldier thus! But surely they will throw him into jail if he speaks so bold? Think you he is a mutineer? I hear it whispered that there are many about. Twice he looked at me—most curiously. Why did he look especially at me, Temperance?"

Annis was greatly agitated; her eyes and mouth were round with surprise, and so great was the impression that the bear leader had made upon her that she did not know whether to be angry with him or sorry for him.

"Is the young man still at the farm?" whispered Temperance.

"Hush-sh-sh! My father has forbidden me to speak to you. I know not! I dare not be seen with you. You should not have come to the farm today, Temperance."

She moved hastily away, and Temperance entered the alehouse, where Dame Pepper was rubbing up a pewter tankard.

A very stout woman was Dame Pepper; there was no shape about her, and her two double chins rested contentedly upon a severe white linen collar, and her round red face smiled kindly from her spotless linen hood. She had no

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fear of the witch's maiden, but on no account would she like it to be known that she had consulted Mother Ursula concerning her rheumatism.

"Good day, Mistress Pepper," said Temperance, bobbing down respectfully. "I have brought you the watercress."

Very discreetly the girl took a little bottle from her basket and, placing it upon the rough oaken table, concealed it with the watercress. Dame Pepper gathered the whole into her voluminous black silk apron, and remarked that the bees were swarming in the apple tree and Temperance had arrived at the right moment.

"Those bees have nearly driven me distracted," remarked Dame Pepper. "They should have swarmed in May, like all respectable bees, but here be this one hive, that I have been watching for weeks, gone mad this morning, and singing enough to deafen you. I beat upon a pot with the front-door key till at last they settled in the apple tree, and now you must go and put them in the skep, Temperance. I trust you not to bewitch them. There is not another man or maid in the town that can handle bees as you do, so I snap my fingers at your sorcery,

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and till I find you unworthy I will trust you with my bees. Folk can talk as much as they please, but go and get the bees out of the apple tree and I will give you a good meal, and maybe a gray flannel petticoat of pure wool that has shrunk in the wash."

Extremely pleased at having the opportunity of visiting Dame Pepper's garden at such an auspicious moment, Temperance went out to examine the swarm, and beheld the bear leader stretched upon a wooden bench in the sun, with the bear dozing beside him. Unfortunately, the swarm was at the bottom of the orchard, out of the man's sight, but if she were quick Temperance hoped to finish her task before the soldier moved on. Going to the pump, she took a long draught of cold water, and washed her hands well, for the bees detested anything unclean, and being so pure themselves—creatures sent straight from heaven—they took kindly only to sweet-smelling breath and clean persons.

As she took the swarm out of the apple tree and put it into a new hive, the girl spoke to the bees, telling them of the herbs in her garden, the starfish washed up on the shore, the curious things she saw upon the marshes, and her voice

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was sweetly soothing. She loved bees; they never harmed her, and she could handle them without protection.

When she had finished she returned to the garden, where the bear leader was finishing a hearty meal, and he hailed her in friendly manner.

"Being a stranger, he knows me not," thought the girl, and she nodded pleasantly, remarking for the first time what a fine man he was with his flashing dark eyes, and the gold rings dangling from his ears. His black beard was certainly unkempt, and his coat ragged, but there was a fervor about him which was infectious.

"The good dame has placed a dish of beef for you," he said, heartily, "and a tankard of the best ale I have ever tasted. Sit yourself down—we two be both knights of the road, methinks."

So Temperance Farncombe sat down to the table with the bear leader, and while she was reflecting upon the best method of questioning him discreetly the bear came up behind her, placed his heavy paw upon her shoulder, and sniffed at a smear of honey on her gown.

Up sprang the girl in a fright, out shot the soldier's arm towards the bear, and gripping

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the chain with one hand, he cuffed the animal soundly about the ears with the other.

"He has taken a great fancy to you," smiled the man.

But Temperance's eyes were fixed upon the arm which had hung limply by the soldier's side till the bear had startled her, and she watched it fall back into its paralyzed position.

"For an arm which has no strength it administers a resounding clout," she remarked.

Then the man came close up to her and spoke in a whisper.

"Have a care, witch's maiden," he said. "You and I, who play tricks for our daily bread and live by our wits, must be friends or enemies. Which are you?"

"Friend—I am not overburdened with friends," she murmured.

Turning to the table, she swept the remains of her meal into her basket, and walked off to claim the gray flannel petticoat which had been promised her as a reward for her services.

CHAPTER V

Pictures in the Black Bowl



AS AN ACTOR SETTING the stage for a play, so did Temperance prepare the cottage on the marsh for her visitor. She had a good eye for effect, and she moved the lantern several times till the light fell to her satisfaction.

On the rough table was a human skull, some clay in a bowl, and Richard, his talons gripping upon a hank of different-colored strands of wool, swayed sleepily to and fro, rolling his eyes till they appeared white and sightless.

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Mother Ursula crouched beside the hearth, deep in thought, and from time to time she threw a sharp question at her serving-maid, and grunted in different tones of anger or approval, according to the effect that the answer had upon her.

"Was he of the quality?" she asked, suddenly.

"The man with the bear?" questioned Temperance. "No, he certainly did not look it! Nevertheless, he was not what he appeared to be, for his arm was as strong as mine."

"Scatterbrain! I was speaking of the young man in the mask."

"Aye, surely. His voice was soft, and most polite even when I shut the door on his foot."

A grunt of satisfaction from the hearth. Kneeling down, Temperance blew upon the salt-eaten wood to kindle the fire, for in spite of the warmth of the evening Mother Ursula insisted upon a fire when she received visitors. Was not fire sacred? the guardian of the home, the mysterious friend of mankind? When the wood blazed Temperance hung a pot over it from an iron spike jutting out from the wall, and into the pot she threw a bundle of herbs which floated upon the clear water it contained.

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"Did Colonel Coplestone see you in the crowd this morning, Temperance?"

"No; I hid behind the elm tree as he approached."

Another grunt of satisfaction.

"Did Goody Pepper give you money for tending the bees?"

"No; only food and the flannel petticoat."

A snarl from the hearth caused Richard to flap his wings and croak angrily. Temperance soothed him by scratching his head with her finger, then she hung a piece of brown sacking over the window and, going out into the night, made sure that no eye could pry through it into the room.

"I wish he would come," she sighed as she closed the door. "I do abhor waiting. Suppose he does not come, after all?"

So angry was the snarl from the hearth that Phineas, the white mouse, ran out of Mother Ursula's pocket and Temperance was obliged to chase him all over the floor. Like a little streak of moonlight he darted hither and thither, enjoying the game, and at last the girl captured him beneath the cupboard and handed him back to his mistress.

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"Open the door of your room and hang the cowhide over your window," commanded Mother Ursula.

"Nay, but I shut my door purposely. If perchance anyone passed and listened at my window——"

"Give me no advice, Temperance Farncombe!"

So Temperance did as she was bidden, then, seated upon a stool, she waited impatiently for the visitor. She wore her only gown turned up over the gray flannel petticoat, and her bright hair was concealed by the old black hood. As she looked at her feet, incased in the broken shoes, a little wave of rebellion passed through her to think that the daughter of Colonel Farncombe should be condemned to wear such things. Yes, and to eat in the company of bear leaders, and beg, and sell charms, and spy. Yet what else could she do? Being only a maiden, she could not go to the wars, so she prayed that the Almighty would forgive her for accepting the life into which she had been forced. Looking back over the years, she felt that she had done no wrong, and why should Mother Ursula's uncanny gift of discerning the future be

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the work of the devil? Aye, folk thought it was the voice of the devil working through those familiar spirits, Phineas and Richard, but Temperance had long since discarded that theory; they were only the tricks of Mother Ursula's trade, even as the paralyzed arm was the trick of the man with the bear. Perhaps Mother Ursula's gifts had been sent straight from heaven; in the Bible there were people who saw the future. And so Temperance went on trying to reconcile Mother Ursula's mysterious power with the Church and the Law, and so oppressive was the heat of the room, and so sweet the odor which issued from the pot over the fire, that the girl longed to fling open the door and drink in a deep draught of the warm, salty zephyr which floated idly up from the sea. She moved restlessly, wondering how Mother Ursula could sit there by the fire as still as a statue. Then there was a gentle tap at the door.

Trembling inwardly with suppressed excitement, but outwardly calm and unconcerned, Temperance drew the bolt and faced the shadowy figure on the threshold.

"Who comes here at this time of night?" she asked, sharply.

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"I have come for the cure for toothache," was the muffled reply.

"'Tis too late to sell cures."

"Nay, but you told me to come at this hour. Endure your toothache till tomorrow at midnight was your command."

"Step inside, stranger."

The figure moved into the cottage, taking care to stand in the shadow, and Mother Ursula arose and approached the table. Seating herself upon the stool that Temperance had vacated, she remained quite silent, with one hand resting upon the skull, and the other fingering the hank of colored wool.

Temperance watched the man closely, for such was her duty, but as he was draped in a long black cloak she could not discern his figure.

"He has taken great care to conceal his appearance," she thought. "Last night he came in his close-fitting coat, but tonight even his neck is swathed and he has not removed his hat. Can he belong to the Society of Friends—the Quakers? Well, my fine gentleman, you can remain there for an hour if you like, but Mother Ursula will not open the conversation. When a man wears a mask he must expect reticence."

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She saw the man shift his weight from one foot to the other, she knew by the tilt of his head that he was observing her face, then, as he glanced at the table, she heard him clear his throat nervously.

"I would buy a cure for the toothache," he said.

"Eightpence," said Mother Ursula.

"'Tis very dear. The apothecary would pull my tooth out for that."

"Then go to the apothecary."

"Nay, I will try your cure."

He placed the money upon the table, and Temperance noted that his hand was smooth and exceedingly well shaped; a hand that had perhaps used a sword but had done no manual labor.

When Mother Ursula had pocketed the money she made a sign to Temperance, and the girl poured some water into the skull from an earthenware jug which stood near the hearth. Then Mother Ursula murmured strange words, and taking a pinch of the clay which Temperance had walked many miles to obtain—it was clay from a priest's grave—she dropped it into the water.

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"Drink it," she commanded.

But the man hesitated; thereupon Temperance took the skull in her hands, sipped the water, then offered him the curious cup.

"If it will not harm me, it will not harm you," she said, and there was derision in her voice.

So he drank it down, every drop, and replaced the skull on the table with such force that Richard started up and flapped his great wings.

"Have you a cure for the jaundice?" asked the man.

"Aye, and for a sty on the eye, and for the whooping cough. But be quick about your business, young man, or go. You have not come to-night to obtain a cure for the jaundice or yet for the toothache."

The young man stiffened visibly, but on second thoughts he laughed.

"You are right," he said. "Is it true that you can tell the future?"

"For a price—yes."

"How much does it cost to be told that I shall wed the loveliest lady in the land and live happy ever after?"

"If you know your future, my lord, why come to me?"

"So that is my future!"

"And your present I will tell you for nothing, too! *You are in danger of losing your head.*"

Temperance saw his hand grip upon the black cloth, but his voice was quite steady when he replied.

"That is news indeed. I am very attached to my head, so perhaps you will oblige me by suggesting how I can escape from the danger of losing it. I will pay the price. I know that I am in danger, and I come to you to find a way out."

"I promise nothing."

But Mother Ursula named the price, and beckoned to the young man to approach the table; Temperance placed a stool for him, and he sat down facing the witch, with the light from the lantern full upon him, and the girl took up her stand behind her mistress' chair.

"Fetch me the black bowl," said Mother Ursula.

When Temperance had placed a black bowl full of water before her, Mother Ursula poked Richard with her long finger, and he awoke.

"Are the stars propitious, Richard?" she asked, and he croaked a harsh reply.

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Then she took Phineas from her pocket and, placing him on the table, covered him with the skull.

"Are the spirits with me, Phineas?" she asked.

The white mouse uttered a faint squeak; then taking the hank of colored wool, Mother Ursula threw it across the table, telling her visitor to hold one end while she held the other.

"This is the bond between us," she said. "Even as a thread binds, so do these strands of wool bind you to secrecy. What I say is for your ears alone; disclose your visit to me and my curse will fall upon you. Are you willing to hold the hank?"

The young man looked up quickly at Temperance, and even beneath the shadow of the broad brim of his hat she perceived that his eyes were very blue, but she gave him no sign.

"Have no fear of the maiden," said Mother Ursula. "She is as silent as the grave, and as harmless."

"I am willing," he murmured, and as he clutched hold of the wool Richard set his claws upon the hank and stood rigid, like a judge, with his bright eyes fixed upon the young man's

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hand, and his beak ready to attack that hand should it drop away during the consultation.

With bent head Mother Ursula gazed into the bowl of water, and there was silence for a little while; then she spoke in a clear, slow voice, soft, yet penetrating.

"You have brought your trouble upon yourself," she said, "because you did not know your own mind. Glory was yours—glory and honor—then in the twinkling of an eye your fortune changed. You have been obliged to flee from your friends, who have become your enemies, and remember this—beware of a man with a hole in his forehead."

"A man with a hole in his forehead?"

"Aye. He loves gold, and you have much gold upon your person. Beware of him."

"How can he harm me?"

"I know not—the picture in the water has faded. But beware of him."

There was another silence during which Mother Ursula gazed earnestly into the bowl, and her mouth contracted, and she wagged her head dubiously.

"The shadow of the block," she murmured.

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"The shadow of the scaffold spreads right across the water."

"Shall I escape it?"

"Do not question me. You have disturbed the picture and it has gone. Let me speak without interruption."

The young man moved restlessly, and looked suspiciously round the room. Temperance perceived that he was frightened, and her heart began to beat painfully. Suppose he were arrested at the cottage? In that case what would become of Mother Ursula and herself? The girl strained her ears, listening for footsteps on the marsh, but the only sound in that desolate spot was the bubbling of the pot on the hearth. After a time the man gripping the hank of colored wool began breathing heavily, as if oppressed by the pungent odor which pervaded the room, and even Temperance, who was accustomed to the perfume of the mysterious mixture of spice and gum which was burning at the back of the hearth, felt her head swimming. Should the commissioner or any stranger arrive, it would be impossible to get rid of that odor which was supposed to put Mother Ursula in communication with the region inhabited by the Prince of

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Darkness, and it alone would condemn her. Temperance wished the consultation was over, and tried to stifle her own fears by thinking of the danger which lurked about the young man. Mother Ursula's voice broke in suddenly upon her thoughts, and she listened intently.

"You have a friend. I see him coming toward you down a steep incline. A man with a bear. Yes, a man leading a bear. About his shoulders are the scars of battle, but in his heart is a song of hope. His life is entangled with yours from this moment onward. He has a message to deliver to you, but he does not know you personally, and has come hither to seek you. His whole life is passing before me in the bowl of water. He fought for Charles Stuart at Worcester, after which he was sent as a slave to the English colonies in America. But after a year or so he escaped to New Amsterdam, and returned to England in a Dutch ship. Since then he has spent his time in watching—watching—like a cat sitting patiently at a mouse hole. He saw the Protector die, he followed that most magnificent funeral procession—the cloth for the mourning has not yet been paid for. Still he waited. He saw the most illustrious Lord Richard Crom-

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well succeed the Protector—and resign with the most excellent allowance of 20,000 good pounds a year and all his debts paid. When he saw the country ruled by the Parliament and the army he took his bear by the chain, and he walked the length and breadth of the land, talking, listening——”

Mother Ursula's voice trailed emptily away, but as she continued gazing fixedly into the water the young man waited patiently till she spoke again.

“There he is. I see him coming toward you through the green woods, drawn as it were by the face of a young maiden. There is a song on his lips. Trust him. Behold the scaffold rises up swiftly behind you, the man with the bear passes by, singing, and there is a very beauteous maiden who befriends you and —— Halt! A warning! A warning! Flee!”

As she uttered the last words Mother Ursula's voice was tense with fear. She snatched the hank of wool from the young man, hid it in the folds of her gown, and turned swiftly to the hearth, where Temperance was kneeling. The pot had boiled over, and partly quenched the fire.

“Go quickly,” whispered Temperance, wav-

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ing the young man toward the door. "I pray you linger not here. The pot has boiled over—a warning that there is danger here for you and for us."

"But I would ——"

"Go!"

Mother Ursula's voice was a command. Richard, with wings outstretched, darted toward the young man, and Temperance flung open the door.

"Quick, the money," she murmured, and with a strange laugh the masked stranger pressed some coins into her hand, then went out into the darkness.

Having closed the door, Temperance leaned up against it, gripping the coins in her hand and listening to the stranger's retreating footsteps. She felt hot with shame.

"Have I done my duty well tonight?" she whispered.

"Excellently well."

"Especially when the pot boiled over! Hardly had your foot moved three times, mistress, when I was at the fire, diligently upsetting the caldron."

"Aye, you did it well. I had told him enough

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for one consultation. This is a great occasion, Temperance. Can you feel that both our lives are in the melting-pot?"

"At first I did think that it was of great import, but the trick at the end distressed me. Did you tell him the truth? Did you see the pictures in the bowl?"

"Yes, I saw the pictures in the bowl, but I did not tell him all that I saw there. Remember that walls have ears. Some day you shall look in the bowl, Temperance, and see for yourself. Not everybody can see. Maybe I am a witch, but I will not forget your loyalty. Bring me a tankard of ale, for I am thirsty."

From a barrel near the door the girl filled an old pewter mug with ale, and handed it to Mother Ursula. The old woman rose, held the tankard significantly, and her eyes met those of Temperance over the brim as she lifted it to her lips. Then she passed it to her serving-maid, who took a sip, and thus the silent pledge was once more sealed.

Richard went squawking up to the rafters, Phineas crept away to his warm nest near the hearth, and without a word Temperance retired to her room, where for a long time she gazed out

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of the hole in the wall. She looked toward the farm where Annis lived, and tried to weave some purpose, some reason into the series of strange incidents which had suddenly occurred.

But the questions which puzzled her most were two of idle curiosity. Who was the masked visitor? and where was he hiding?

CHAPTER VI

Confidences of Several Different Natures



THE FOLLOWING MORNING

Temperance was up betimes and about her business. She had a long walk to draw water from the well,

which was often polluted by the sea, and as she trudged back over the shingle with a heavy bucket in either hand her eyes scanned the shore, the sky, the marshes, searching for some human figure, but it seemed to her that she had the world to herself.

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Yet the masked stranger was certainly within easy distance of the cottage. Could he be at Jeremy Twisden's farm? She determined to hurry over her work, then go up to Winchelsea and inquire after Dame Pepper's bees. If the man with the bear were still there she would certainly see him, and perhaps learn something.

As usual, Mother Ursula guessed her thoughts, for when Temperance returned with the water the witch forbade her to leave the cottage again that day.

"Do not argue with me," said Mother Ursula, who was busy concocting salves. "Remain in the cottage or in the garden. Go and catch me seven spiders."

"If I catch the spiders, there will be no more webs with which to plaster wounds," grumbled Temperance.

"'Tis well that you fell into my hands, Temperance Farncombe! No other woman would have patience with you. For ten years have I striven to curb your willful spirit and teach you obedience. When will you learn to obey me without question?"

"'Tis such implicit obedience you require," murmured Temperance, hanging her head.

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"The man with the bear may be useful to us, mistress, and I wished to go to Winchelsea to see him."

"Aye, but I prefer him to come to us. I saw him in the bowl of water. Go and catch me seven spiders."

Spiders were used in many of Mother Ursula's medicines, and as she could not find sufficient in the garden, Temperance went to her room and sought in the corners of the ceiling and round about her window. She had an exquisite little cage in which to put the spiders; it was made of the finest strips of bamboo woven together like a loose cloth, and Mother Ursula had obtained it from a man who had returned from China—a strange man who had come to the cottage one night to learn how to get rid of an enemy, and Mother Ursula had advised him to make a little waxen figure of his foe, and shut it up in a drawer or bury it in the cold earth, and she taught him some magic words to utter every day till his enemy pined away and died. Sure enough, in three months the enemy died and the man returned to the cottage with gifts for Mother Ursula.

He gave her the beautiful little cage in which,

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he told Temperance, the Chinese kept singing grasshoppers, and a packet of those venomous and shriveled black leaves from which China Drink was brewed. Tcha, or tea, as the China Drink was sometimes called, possessed properties of great wickedness, and to drink it was a heathenish habit, but as it was exceedingly rare and cost about ten pounds for a small packet, this un-Christian beverage was drunk only in secret by the recklessly venturesome.

Temperance was thinking of the singing grasshoppers and the strange China Drink as she hunted for spiders round the hole in her wall, when suddenly she perceived the figure of Annis Twisden running across the marshes. As Temperance watched Annis a little wave of envy mounted in her heart. How sweet she looked in her fresh gown of printed cotton, a material recently imported from the East Indies, and her large white apron. Her linen collar and bonnet were starched, too; indeed, for so early an hour in the morning Annis looked very smart. Temperance waved silently to her through the hole in the wall, and as her friend approached she noticed that her blue eyes were round with ex-

citement, though her face expressed dismay rather than pleasure.

"Come down to the shore. I have much to tell you," whispered Annis through the window. "My father has gone to Winchelsea, and I have but half an hour to spare."

"Tell me here. Mother Ursula will not let me go out."

"Nay, I dare not speak here. I am afraid of her. Mercy! there is Richard!"

Annis was terrified of Richard, and as he pushed his head through the hole the girl raced away toward the bank of shingle. Unhooking Richard's talons from her shoulder, Temperance placed the raven on the floor, then entered the other room and told Mother Ursula what had occurred.

"You may go as far as the shore," replied the witch, without raising her eyes from the ointment she was mixing.

Temperance needed no second permission. Having placed the exquisite little cage upon the table, she ran off, and found Annis sitting on the beach, hidden from the marsh by the great heap of pebbles. It was very hot, the sea was a long way out, and the great gulls flapped and

circled idly in the air. Temperance sat down beside her friend and, pushing back her hood, shook her head and pushed her fingers up through her rebellious hair.

"Now tell me, dear Annis," she said.

"I know where the young man is hidden."

"Mercy me! In your house?"

"Yes. Last night—long after midnight—he returned, and as I could not be certain whether the voice I heard was thieves or perhaps my father walking about downstairs because of the pain in his forehead, I got up and looked cautiously over the banisters. My father and the young man were in the passage, and softly, without speech, they entered the parlor. You have never seen our parlor, Temperance, have you?"

"I have never entered your home, Annis!"

"'Tis not my fault, sweet. The parlor is paneled all round with the wood of old ships which my great-grandfather got from the sea after the defeat of the Armada. Being a clever joiner, he made the parlor for his bride, a young seamstress from London who was employed as an embroidress at court. Well, I saw my father go up to the wall, press upon the panel near the hearth, and it slid back. The young man stepped on to

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the wooden chest, vanished into the hole, and, sooner than it takes to tell, my father had pushed the panel back and I was obliged to dart to my room for fear he should see me."

"Annis! 'Tis most amazing. A secret passage?"

"Yes, and I should not be surprised if it has not another entrance in the disused well in the field. You know there is a rail round the well to prevent the cattle from falling into it, and methinks that is the other end of the passage. The young man must be in great danger."

Temperance nodded; she longed to tell Annis what she knew of the masked stranger, but she dared not, and because she could not she felt sad and sat silent, letting the dry sand slip through her brown fingers.

"And then—this morning—I was greatly upset," murmured Annis.

"Has your father found out that you know of the young man?"

"Oh no! You see, it is very hot, so I put on my new pintado dress, and my appearance greatly angered my father. He scolded me and made me cry, and as I was wiping my eyes in the dairy who should come to the door but the man with the bear."

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"The man with the bear!"

"Yes, that is what I said—the man with the bear."

"Oh Annis, what did he want?"

"I do not know. Probably he had come to beg. He was much distressed to see me weeping, and I was annoyed that so uncouth a man should find me crying like a child, but amazed at the kindness of his manners. I was all fluttered to be found in such a state, but I assure you, Temperance, that I would not belittle myself to coquette with a bear leader, be he ever so handsome, yet that is what my father accused me of. The words the soldier spoke to me were most respectful and humble, yet when my father appeared there was a regular hullabaloo. He threatened to horsewhip the bear leader and drove him from the farm. Then he rated me soundly for speaking to such a caitiff! I can do nothing right these days. I do not know what possesses my father to be so cross with me!"

Annis began weeping bitterly, murmuring that she hoped Mother Ursula had not bewitched her father, for of a truth his temper was unbearable, and Temperance comforted her as best she could.

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"He is worried," said Temperance. "The young man in the secret passage is most likely a trouble to him, and the hot sun affects the wound in his forehead."

"If it is cold, or there is rain in the air, it is the same thing! Oh, if I had the courage I would run away to the army—or even to the fleet—but what is the good of a girl in the world today?"

Was it possible, reflected Temperance, that Annis, with her pretty dresses and goodly farm and no lack of money, was less happy than she was herself with her ragged appearance and questionable reputation? She had, herself, often thought of running away to the King's army, but who wanted a maiden? If only they had been boys, she and Annis! But maybe they would have taken different sides, and in the din of battle their friendship would have died. Oh, it was all a great puzzle and very distressing! Temperance put her arm round her friend's neck and kissed the soft, damp cheek.

"Take courage, Annis. 'Twill come right in the end if you keep a stout heart."

"I doubt it. There are whispers abroad that some portion of the army favor the return of

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Charles Stuart, and should he come to power what will become of us? Shall I be turned out to beg as you have been, Temperance? My father has a little money, although he is but a farmer of no import, and the farm is his own. It would break my heart to see it burn. Is the Prince a man of vengeance?"

Temperance sprang to her feet, her cheeks flaming, her eyes brilliant, and she clasped her hands tightly together.

"Nay, but I would go on my knees to the King for you, Annis, if it came to that! I would not claim one of my own rights that you might retain your farm. Oh, surely there could not be more vengeance and bloodshed if the King returned? Can it be that one day I shall cry out loud the words that be forever trembling on my lips? Will the King come back to his own?"

The flame of her loyalty burned like a fire within her, and Annis could not understand such passionate devotion to an unknown prince, nevertheless her own heart began to beat in unison with that of Temperance. She felt that there must be something mighty about a king if his name alone inspired this selfless devotion, and she rose from the shingle trembling nervously.

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"Whatever happens, we will be friends forever," she sobbed. "Now I must go back. No, do not come with me, in case my father sees us. I have disobeyed him again by speaking to you. It is so difficult to do always that which he tells me to do!"

Temperance waited till Annis was well ahead, then she bounded over the sand and raced to the cottage; her voice was as joyous as the birds in spring as she entered the door, and her hair all falling over her brown eyes.

"Mistress, I have somewhat of great importance to tell you!" she cried. "It is rumored that some portions of the army are in favor of the King's return!"

"Aye, I know."

"And you did not tell me!"

"You talk too much."

"To whom, pray?"

"To Annis Twisden. Her father could hang me."

"And you say you could hang him!"

"It is true; I could."

"Mistress, tell me what you know of him."

"He took money from a young nobleman, Sir Godfrey Vane, a Royalist in hiding. It was after

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the execution of His Most Blessed Majesty of Sacred Memory, when Jeremy Twisden was in Cromwell's army. Chance threw Sir Godfrey Vane in his way, and instead of denouncing him to his general Jeremy Twisden accepted money to keep his mouth shut."

"How did you know this, mistress?"

"Because it was my business to know. I was in London and I acted as go-between. Jeremy Twisden never saw Sir Godfrey Vane, but he knew his hiding-place, and as he was one of the soldiers hunting for Sir Godfrey, he kept his companions away. Twisden is a miser first and a patriot after. Many were the gold pieces which I brought to him at night, and no doubt they are buried somewhere on the other side of those trees yonder. Master Twisden was not best pleased when, years later, he found me ensconced at his gates. I tell you this secret, Temperance, because the times are very troubled and it may be useful to you in the future. Do not use it unless you are obliged. What did Annis say to you?"

Breathlessly Temperance told her, and Mother Ursula twittered raucously like a vulture enjoying a joke, and Richard imitated her,

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rocking himself backward and forward in his merriment and making playful lunges at Temperance.

"I cannot see why you laugh," pouted the girl.

"No, but some day you will know, and then you will laugh too. 'Tis a rare joke."

Temperance racked her brains to account for the merriment, but without avail, so she attacked another subject.

"'Tis very odd to think of the young man shut up in the passage," she murmured. "And the bear leader coming so close to us. Did you not see him in the bowl of water last night? He was coming across the marshes to the young man—*drawn by a maiden's face.*"

"Yes, I saw him. I told you he would come."

"But I hoped it would be to our cottage."

"Ours? Since when do you possess a cottage, Temperance Farncombe? Our cottage, indeed! You impertinent slut!"

Mother Ursula lapsed back into her severe manner, and Temperance knew it was useless to try to lure her into any more confidences. It was always thus. What Mother Ursula gave with one hand she took away with the other, and

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for the rest of the day she refused to speak to her serving-maid. Temperance showed no sign of resentment, for she had learned long since that it was better to take no notice of her mistress' moods.

So she sang as she went about her work in cottage and garden, and for want of better companions talked to Richard and Phineas. When the tide returned she took a net and bucket, and went with Richard to catch shrimps in the little pools near a few flat rocks on the shore. Richard did not love her as he did his mistress, but he knew his duty toward her, and Temperance felt he was both a companion and a protection. It was said that Richard was a hundred years old, and if wisdom be a proof of age, then the bird might well have been a centenarian.

"Will the King return, Richard?" questioned Temperance as she splashed along in the wet sand with the little white frills of water breaking over her feet. Being busily engaged upon the carcass of a dead crab, Richard did not reply, so Temperance asked him another question.

"Do you think, Richard, that I shall see the

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masked stranger again? Will he escape the shadow that is falling upon him?"

"Caw! Caw!" croaked Richard.

"Well, I am glad of that, because he has a very pleasant voice. Richard, look at the moon —'tis waxing quite big."

"Caw!"

"The smugglers will not be able to come over from France with their wine. This is a bad place for smugglers now because the cliffs with their dark caves are too far from the sea. Richard, would it not be a fine sight to see a mighty ship passing with the King's jack flying in the wind?"

"Caw! Caw! Caw!"

The conversation continued, Temperance talking her thoughts aloud, cuffing Richard occasionally when he stole a particularly fine shrimp from her pail, and telling him of the strange habits she had observed in crabs and other sea creatures.

It was twilight when she returned, and as Richard approached the cottage with his head on one side, Temperance walked on tiptoes and looked cautiously in. Mother Ursula was sitting at the table, bending over the black bowl. Not wishing to disturb her, the girl bolted the door,

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placed the basket containing the shrimps upon the floor, and stood watching her mistress' face till dusk fell. What did she learn from that bowl of water? Phineas, peeping out of the skull, squeaked now and again; Richard crept to his mistress' lap just as a cat might have done, and went to sleep, while the soft summer darkness shrouded the marshes. After a time the witch glanced up and met the earnest regard of her serving-maid.

"Mistress, let me look," pleaded Temperance.

"Have you the courage?"

"Yes."

"Then come and look over my shoulder."

Trembling with excitement, for never before had she been permitted to gaze into the black bowl, Temperance placed herself behind Mother Ursula, and peered down.

At first a film obscured the water, but gradually it cleared, and Temperance beheld the shadowy outline of the great Church of Saint Thomas. Before the church were many figures, but so indistinct were they that the girl knelt on the floor to see better, and her breath came fluttering to her lips. She beheld a lady in a yellow silk gown with a brown cloak flowing from her

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shoulders, and a tall black hat perched a little rakishly upon her head. A young lady with a very imperious face, and tufts of black hair pulled out on either cheek from beneath a silken hood. This lady was talking in animated fashion to a man dressed in the red coat of a soldier with a sword hanging by his side, but his thin, smiling face was as unknown to Temperance as that of the young woman. But so interested was the girl in the elegant young person clad in yellow that she hardly noticed the excited crowd surging round the church, and bending down the better to examine the watery picture, a lock of her hair touched the surface and the reflection vanished.

Temperance could have wept with disappointment, but, biting her lips to keep back her regrets, she gazed eagerly at the bowl again, and gradually she discerned two figures racing up the hill toward the church as if the devil were at their heels.

"Annis!" she whispered.

Yes, one of the figures was that of Annis. Annis with her gown bedraggled, tears upon her face, terror in her eyes, and clinging to the hand of a maiden who ran ahead with her face tilted

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upward and her mouth open as if she were speaking. It was the picture of Temperance herself! On, on to the church of Saint Thomas they ran, Annis with feet like lead, Temperance triumphant yet apprehensive. Then from out that same crowd of people there stepped a man with dark curls falling from under his tall hat, and a long pearl dangling from his left ear. Temperance peered into the water to examine his face, which was hidden beneath the broad brim of his hat, and at that moment Richard uttered a loud warning cry.

Suddenly a heavy body fell upon the bolted door as if trying to burst it open, then beat upon it with impatient hands.

"Help!" implored a smothered, anguished voice. "Open, I pray you. In the King's name—help!"

CHAPTER VII

In the King's Service



HARDLY WAITING FOR A SIGN from her mistress, Temperance withdrew the great wooden bolt of the door and the masked stranger stumbled into the room. He was panting for lack of breath, and the hand which gripped Temperance for support trembled violently.

“They are close upon me. There was no other place in which to take refuge. I carry a letter—of—much—importance.”

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"You should not have come here," whispered Mother Ursula, hoarsely. "'Twill bring ruin on me and the maiden."

Then voices were heard outside, and the young man darted swiftly to the chimney. But Temperance seized him and thrust him into her room.

"The window," she gasped. "The sea—the tide is up."

She heard the stamp of heavy boots upon the little pebbled path, and as the cottage door was ajar the pursuers of the masked stranger had no difficulty in forcing their way in. Colonel Coplestone came blundering across the room, rampant with fury, while Master Jeremy Twisden, who was by far the more crafty of the two, stood outside, from where he could observe the cottage, the marsh, and the high bank of shingle glistening like a ghostly cloud rolled up by the sea.

"Deliver me the varlet who has sought refuge here!" thundered Colonel Coplestone.

"Your Honor is mistaken," answered Mother Ursula, in a scared and whimpering voice, utterly unlike her usual manner of speaking. "There is nobody here."

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"You lie! Where else could he have gone to? I will search the cottage."

"Your lordship is welcome."

The commissioner flung open the chest in which wood was stored, thrust his sword up the chimney, looked into the cupboard, and shouted for more light. With trembling hands Temperance lit two candles, and seizing the lantern Colonel Coppleson strode toward the door leading to the girl's room.

"Keep a watch on the chimney, Twisden!" he shouted.

"Aye, sir; and there is a small window in the second room," answered the sullen voice of Jeremy Twisden.

Then, when it seemed to Temperance that no power on earth could save the masked stranger, Richard came screaming and chattering from the rafters, and attacked the Colonel violently. Wings outstretched, head low, beak agape, and his malicious eyes bright with anger, the raven followed no rules of chivalry, but attacked where he could, darting up to the Colonel's face, clinging to his legs, using beak, talons, and wings in his fury. In vain the Colonel tried to drive him off with his sword, and as he dashed the

lantern at the enraged bird Temperance extinguished the candles.

"Twisden—shoot this spirit of evil!" bellowed the Colonel. "'Tis a trap to delay us. A light! The girl has put out the candles!"

"'Twas the wind!" shrieked Mother Ursula. "My curse be upon you if you harm the raven! When looking into water I saw the face of Sir Godfrey Vane, and ——"

Upon hearing that name Jeremy Twisden came rushing into the cottage to protect both himself and the Colonel, and catching hold of Mother Ursula more by chance than by good management, he thrust her against the wall and commanded her hoarsely to keep her mouth shut if she would be shown mercy.

"Nay," she cried, "I will say what I like! A poor old woman who does no harm. I will appeal to court for justice. Richard—my little Richard—are you harmed, my pet? A light—for the love of God!"

Temperance lit the candles again, and offering one to Colonel Coppelstone begged him to search where he would; by the light of the feeble flame she perceived Richard fluttering up to the rafters, croaking horribly, and there he

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remained like an ominous shadow, watching the proceedings.

Now Jeremy Twisden had no desire to shoot the witch's familiar, for such conduct would, he knew, bring down vengeance upon his head, therefore he made no attempt to carry out the commands of his superior, and in his rage and anxiety Colonel Coplestone postponed the raven's punishment for a more auspicious moment. Muttering to himself, the Colonel entered Temperance's room, and Jeremy Twisden strode back to the door, but on the threshold Mother Ursula stopped him.

"So you are playing the same old game still," she whispered. "Running with the stag and with the hunters. This time it has not worked so well for you, my friend."

"Silent, you witch! I will have you hanged."

"Nay, I will have you hanged for harboring a mutineer. And such a mutineer! Methinks Colonel Coplestone cannot know his name, but would be most obliged to anyone who would whisper it in his ear. Why have you kept the masked stranger's name from him, Master Twisden?"

"Sorceress! I know not the man's name. I was deceived by him."

"Therefore you have betrayed him to—the Commissioner!"

She chuckled horribly, but as the Colonel returned from searching Temperance's room she ceased speaking, and the angry man pushed past her and out into the night.

"Leave the door open," he commanded. "I will return and deal with you later."

Mother Ursula and her serving-maid heard the little stream of pebbles rippling down to the sand as the two men scrambled over the bank, but they waited silently till the sound of their voices calling to one another echoed up but faintly from the shore; then Temperance spoke.

"Are you in danger, mistress?" she murmured.

"Who can tell?"

"I will stand by you."

"Aye, but leave me to my fate, whatever it is. Remain here and take my place if you can."

"You know the young man's name?"

"I guessed it tonight. 'Twas an arrow drawn at a venture, but it struck home. Maybe it will save my neck."

A shudder of horror passed through Temper-

ance, and she twisted her hands together in an agony of fear. When she had fought down her emotion she spoke again:

"Why did Jeremy Twisden betray the masked stranger to Colonel Copplestone?"

"Methinks he was suddenly afraid the young man would be discovered in his house. He had news, most likely, that there was a price on his head, and many were searching for him. For money Jeremy Twisden would enter into an arrangement with Satan himself, but he always allows himself a loophole by which he can escape from his obligations if necessary. Do I hear footsteps?"

"Yes."

"Keep a curb upon your tongue, Temperance. I am well able to look after myself."

"Yes."

"And trust the man with the bear. 'Twas him I went to see in Rye some days back, and he was on the lookout for a fugitive. Many and strange folk work in the King's service. There are five pieces of gold hid in the rafters where Richard sleeps."

"But, mistress, you will not leave me here?"

"Hush, you white-livered milksop! I will not go without a struggle."

"Run!"

"Where to? And my legs be too old! Here they are."

Then Colonel Copplestone and Jeremy Twisden entered the cottage, and so enraged was the Colonel at having lost his quarry that he determined to secure other game to recompense him for his evening's trouble and the loss of his good meal. Jeremy Twisden had tried to persuade him to return home, saying that a regiment of soldiers was out searching for the stranger who had so imposed upon his kindness of heart, and reminded his superior that all the ports were watched, but none of his arguments turned Colonel Copplestone's feet from the direction of Ursula Harbottle's abode. The Colonel was furious at being so ignominiously routed by the raven, and the threat with which Mother Ursula had dared to intimidate him stuck in his throat like a fishbone and irritated him almost beyond endurance. At the same time he feared that Mother Ursula's curse might do him serious harm.

"Hi, you witch!" he cried as he entered the cottage. "I arrest you on the charge of harboring

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a miscreant and causing me much delay by inducing your familiar to attack me."

"There was nobody in the cottage. Your lordship sought, and found nothing."

"Tell me no lies! Maybe you deny that you cursed me?"

"I do! A poor old woman like me has no power to curse. I said if you ——"

"Tie her up, Twisden. She will not come quietly."

"There is nobody here!" screamed Temperance. "There is no charge on which you can arrest my mistress!"

"I arrest her for practicing witchcraft and casting evil spells."

"Ho! Wait till you hear me speak!" cried Mother Ursula. "I can tell a fine story of years past when Master Twisden took bribes from Sir Godfrey Vane, the Royalist, and now maybe he is playing the same game with the mysterious fugitive. I can tell such secrets, my lord, that the hair will tingle on your neck and you will shake at the knee."

Her ravings only added to the Colonel's rage, and although Temperance waited in an agony of uncertainty for Mother Ursula to disclose the

stranger's name and thus save herself from prison, the witch did not do so. Evidently the moment was not ripe. Therefore, amid a scene of great confusion Jeremy Twisden pinioned Mother Ursula's arms behind her with the rope he had brought to secure the masked stranger, and once again Richard entered into the fray. But this time he was of no avail. Mother Ursula gave him an incomprehensible order, but before he could reach his refuge in the roof the Colonel struck at him and evidently damaged his wing, for the bird fluttered painfully to the rafters and vanished from sight.

As they dragged Ursula Harbottle out and led her away across the marshes, Temperance burst into tears and followed, imploring the Colonel to have mercy, till at last Mother Ursula turned fiercely upon her serving-maid and rated her soundly.

"Stop sniveling at my heels, you good-for-nothing! Aye, Temperance Farncombe, remember what befell you when you defied the Law and His Highness' soldiers came marching up to Farncombe Hall. Here am I going quietly like a martyr, knowing I shall have justice from those set in authority over me, and you must

needs come whining behind me, asking for mercy as if I had done evil. As long as I have a tongue in my head I have no fear. Shame upon you, Temperance Farncombe!"

The name of Farncombe did not ring pleasantly in Colonel Coplestone's ears, but it acted as magic upon Temperance. She stood quite stiff and still while the two men and Mother Ursula crossed the ditch and vanished into the mists which had risen over the marsh. As she returned to the cottage there was anger as well as sorrow in her heart. Anger that she had so far forgotten herself as to weep like any poor peasant girl and beg her enemies to have mercy. She—the daughter of a great soldier; she—the faithful servant of the King. Bah! She was not even worthy to be the serving-maid of Ursula Harbottle.

With the tears streaming down her face, but with proud steps, she entered the cottage, and having bolted the door she leaned up against it wearily. Soon her courage would return; she would have confidence in her mistress. Yes, Mother Ursula would come back in the morning. She would go and wait for her outside the prison, and bring her home. She would help her in her time of trouble even as the witch had be-

friended her when she was in distress. Ah, she would carry her head high! Then she wondered what had become of the masked fugitive; in the shock of the disaster which had befallen her mistress she had forgotten him.

She listened intently for any unfamiliar sound, and was suddenly aware of her solitude. Not a creature near her save the gulls and the plovers and the sand martins, and they were all abed and asleep. On such a still night one might almost hear the bells ringing in the town beneath the waves. Hardly daring to breathe, Temperance looked up at the rafters, almost expecting to see the keel of a ship passing over her head. Oh, she must not have these strange thoughts, and she could not bear the solitude of that place!

"Richard!" she called, appealingly.

He did not reply, so, taking a rough ladder from the wall, she climbed up into the rafters to look for him, but even then he would not answer her voice, but remained huddled and miserable in his corner. Indeed, so miserable was he that when Temperance put out her hand to take him he jabbed unkindly at it, but, having no fear, she caught hold of his beak, pulled him

out by force, and carried him down the ladder. One of his wings was broken.

"Poor Richard!" she murmured, soothingly. "We will mend it. You were very brave, Richard. Now we are all alone—just you and me."

He made no fuss, but allowed her to bind his wing to a strip of wood, yet all the time he was looking anxiously round the room, seeking something which was not there.

"She will return tomorrow," nodded Temperance. "You must keep me company, Richard, till she comes back. Now we must look for Phineas. Did Mother Ursula take him out of her pocket before she left?"

With the raven tucked under her arm she went and looked behind the hearth, but, failing to discover the white mouse in his favorite haunt, she was filled with fear and sought him everywhere. If Phineas were found in Mother Ursula's possession it would be a great argument against her. Richard also became uneasy, and shuffling down from Temperance's arms he hopped forlornly about, poking his old head into all the nooks and corners and calling anxiously to Phineas. It was the raven who eventually discovered him in the wood-chest, and

Temperance pounced upon the truant with immense relief. Satin white, elegant, like a streak of warm moonlight the beautiful little mouse sat up prettily in her hand and looked at her with his jeweled eyes.

"Giving me all that trouble," murmured the girl, touching his exquisite coat with her cheek. "Now you shall go into your cage till your mistress returns. She will come back tomorrow, Phineas."

She did not feel inclined to undress and go to bed, in case some new disturbance arose during the night, so after hiding the black bowl and the skull and bolting both doors, she stretched herself upon the floor near the hearth and tried to sleep. But no sleep came to her eyes because the events of the evening passed continually through her brain and gave her no rest. She turned and twisted upon the ground, peering at the dark shape of Richard perched uncomfortably among the sticks upon the hearth, and straining her eyes to make sure of the tiny luminous patch in the corner which she knew to be Phineas.

Then the faint voice of a curlew came up from the sea. She listened, and she saw Rich-

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ard's head go up. Again the curlew called—a weird, screaming whistle, plaintive yet ghostly. Being accustomed to that cry, Temperance was not afraid of the strange, arch-billed bird which some folk dreaded at night. To be sure, he loved the dark and marshy spots where will-o'-the-wisp hung his fairy light to mislead travelers, and he was no doubt one of the cunning spirits of the night, but until she proved the curlew to be worthless Temperance trusted him. Nevertheless, she had never heard a curlew scream as this one screamed. His voice seemed quite alone in the solitary night, and again and again it rang out.

Richard hopped toward the door, and Temperance followed him, opening it about an inch to hear the better. Her ear, trained to all the music of the shore and marshes, detected a strange note in this curlew's cry, and with the raven in her arms she stepped into the garden. The call of the curlew came from the shore. Moistening her lips, Temperance replied to the call, and was immediately answered. Three times she imitated the curlew, and three times the answer came back to her over the bank of shingle.

"Richard, you must stay behind," she whispered. "I dare not take you—with your poor wing. Keep the house for me till I return."

Much against his will, the raven was pushed into the cottage, Temperance closed the door and made her way cautiously over the bank of pebbles. It was a dark night; there was a thick mist upon the marshes, and a heavy dampness floated up from the sea. No moon shone in the dull vault above, and it was bleak and chill. The pebbles rumbled beneath the girl's bare feet, and when at last she reached the stretch of sand it struck cold and wet.

Repeating the cry of the curlew, and guiding her footsteps by the reply, Temperance approached the edge of the water, and peering out perceived a dark mass which might have been seaweed. Something round moved upon the mass, and rose higher and higher out of the water as it came toward the shore, but while it was still some way off a murmur, little above a whisper, caught Temperance's ear.

"Is that you, witch-maiden?"

"Yes. Be you the masked stranger?"

"Yes. Is all safe?"

"They have returned to Winchelsea. But methinks that the danger is greater than ever."

Then the young man came out of the water and stood dripping upon the shore. He had lost his tall hat, and he halted beside Temperance like a strange dark shadow from which the water was streaming.

"I know not where to go," he said, wearily. "The ship which was to take me to France does not come. Your mistress was right—I have been betrayed by one whom I trusted."

"It is unwise to trust a miser."

"So it would seem! Is there one loyal person hereabouts? I called like the curlew, thinking perchance that you could help me."

"I can give you food."

"'Tis shelter I require—before dawn breaks. They will search for me all along the coast."

"How do you expect to get to France?"

"Maybe in an open boat belonging to some smugglers. They will come by night, and there is a sign between us."

"To whom do you carry a letter?"

"To the King."

"There is but one place that I know of where you can hide. I discovered it myself long ago.

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'Tis a cave in the cliffs on the marsh. The sea has long since deserted those cliffs and the caves are too far off to be of use to the smugglers. This one has a very small entrance. 'Tis the home of the sand martins."

"My gratitude to you will be eternal will you but lead me there. I am in your hands."

"Hasten!"

And through the mist they ran swiftly, Temperance leading the way.

CHAPTER VIII

The Meeting of Friends



WITH A BASKET CONTAIN-
ing simples on her arm Temper-
ance waited outside the prison,
hoping for the arrival of Colonel Cottlestone
or Master Jeremy Twisden.

At dawn she had arranged her simple cures—
the sweet vervain to frighten away evil, the
wholesome gilliflowers, rue to guard off old age,
horehound, bitter mint to heal the bite of a dog,
pansies to induce sweet thoughts, and several
others. But, weary with lingering and with the

emotions of the previous day, she now sat herself down in the road and cried her wares to the passers-by.

It was ten o'clock in the morning and all the world was agog and bustling about its business.

"Come—buy, buy!" cried Temperance. "I sell herbs that will make pale cheeks blush like the rose! The lean shall be plump, and the stout slender as a lily. What is your malady? I have a cure! Cowslips for the deaf! Come—buy, buy! I have sweet simples to sell!"

The apothecary's daughter crossed to the other side of the street when she beheld Temperance; others took care not to touch her with their voluminous skirts; some of the young men grinned, but gave her a wide birth, while many of the children put out their tongues at her.

"Witch's maiden!" they cried.

But Temperance took not the slightest heed; her clear voice rang out, her face was smiling, and she had a quick, apt word for all who addressed her.

"You have overlooked my horse," shouted a red-faced miller. "I saw you cast your eye over him the day the bear danced outside 'The Four

Alls.' He has been sick ever since—all stupefied."

"Nay, master, it has naught to do with me," replied the girl. "If he is sick he is most likely planet-struck. All stupidity and lunacy come from the planets, master. You yourself know how the planets do blight trees and cause fits. Bring me to your house and I will cure him!"

But the man passed on, and Temperance arose to make a curtsy to Dame Pepper, who approached leisurely, fanning her crimson face with a large white linen handkerchief.

"I will take a bunch of rue," said the portly dame. "So your mistress is in prison at last! How she has kept out so long is a mystery to me. And who be this traitor that escaped from Master Twisden and whom she has befriended?"

"How should I know? It be a false accusation. We know nothing of traitors."

"You do lie as glibly as the witch herself, Temperance! There are rumors that the young man who escaped last night be the brother of Charles Stuart. 'Twould be a feather in Jeremy Twisden's cap could he catch such a one! Ho well, if Ursula Harbottle does not hang for aiding and abetting James Stuart, she will most

certainly do so for setting a curse on Colonel Coplestone. Most foolish behavior."

"She did not curse him! He has twisted her words!"

"Mercy me! Still a spitfire! Have a care for your own skin, Temperance."

Like a ship in full sail the ample dame passed on; she was too fat to be angry or nurse a grudge for long, but her gossip had stolen much of Temperance's courage. Was it possible that the young man whom she had led to the cave on the previous evening was the Duke of York? Temperance could not believe it, yet she was pretty near sick with fear. If he were the Duke of York, nothing could save Mother Ursula's head, but it would be hard to prove such an accusation. Her first impulse was to rush down to the cave and beg the young man to come forward and deny that he was the Duke of York, but only for a moment did such a wild idea tempt her.

"We should be proud to suffer in the King's service," she thought, "and I pray the Lord that our friend has departed in the night, whosoever he be. Mercy! Here be the Colonel!"

She watched the commissioner as he entered

the prison, and remarked that his face was as stern as the rocks; there was no softness in it, no little lines of humor or grief, but only relentless severity. The girl's heart sank, but she edged up nearer to the prison, determined to address him when he came out. For an hour she lingered there, and as the Colonel emerged she went forward and made him a deep obeisance. Yes, Temperance Farncombe bent the knee to her enemy this time!

"Your lordship," she pleaded.

"Get out of my path," stormed Colonel Copplestone.

"Oh, release her! Of your Christian charity——"

"She shall be tried, and I promise you she shall get her desert!"

He pushed the girl roughly aside, mounted his horse, and galloped off. Biting her trembling lips, but with her head high, Temperance took her basket on her arm and walked slowly home. She wondered how she would live were Mother Ursula kept in prison for many months, perhaps years. Strange that she should feel so much affection for the witch. How often as a child had Mother Ursula whipped her, and even now her

heavy hand was always ready to strike, yet in the midst of her harsh treatment a gleam of true friendship would often flash forth and destroy her unkindness.

"Gold pieces in the rafters—she would not have told me had she not meant me to use them," reflected the girl. "Then the story of Sir Godfrey Vane—and *take my place*, she said. Trust the man with the bear. Surely she did foresee this misfortune and sought to help me in every way. She did not lack courage, therefore I will not. But, dearie me! it is a sad thing to be alone. What is the secret knowledge in which she trusts? She knew her life was in danger, yet she hopes to save it. Nay, the young man cannot be the Duke of York, for that would condemn her without a trial."

As she passed Jeremy Twisden's house Temperance longed for the companionship of Annis—dear, sweet Annis, as fresh as the flowers and as pretty as they were. Comparing herself with Annis, Temperance felt like a rough fir tree, all bristles and points, forever fighting the storm, and striving to stand firm and proud in spite of the aches in her heart.

Arriving at the cottage, she placed Richard

out in the sun, and there he stayed, hunched up, ashamed of his patched wing, moping for his mistress.

"For goodness' sake be of better cheer!" cried Temperance. "I cannot abide so sorrowful a sight. Are you hungry, Richard?"

He would not answer, neither would he eat, and reproving him for his vile temper Temperance cleaned up the cottage and tried to decide upon the course of action she would take.

"The most pressing need is to supply food to the masked stranger," she thought. "It is wiser to do that by day than by night. The spot is so exposed that by day I can see for miles round, and if some one observes me there it will not appear strange, for I often snare rabbits on the cliff, and Jeremy Twisden has already accused me of telling the future by observing the flight of the sand martins. Aye, and if he comes prying I will confide to him what the sand martins tell me! I can deal with a coward such as Jeremy Twisden."

Placing a large supply of food in the bottom of her fishing-basket, and taking her net and rabbit snares, Temperance closed the cottage door and went resolutely up to Richard.

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"You give me the doldrums," she said, "and me as miserable as sin already. Will you sit on the basket, or will you walk?"

Richard refused to walk, and Temperance was obliged to give him a good nudge before he consented to perch upon the basket which she carried on her back.

Skirting the bog where the fool fires wandered at night, Temperance made her way to the expanse of dry grass which led to the deserted cliffs. She never passed that damp and quaggy spot without wondering about the walking fires which haunted it at night. Was it but the mucus sneezed from the nostrils of rheumatic planets, or the souls of the departed returned to earth to ask for prayers? Opinions differed, and Temperance did not know what to think. Sometimes they called the fool fires will-o'-the-wisp, or jack-o'-lantern because they led travelers astray, but whatever they were, Temperance was none too pleased to encounter them at night when perchance she was catching frogs for Mother Ursula's spells.

The cliffs were some distance from the bog; they flashed white in the sun, and on their summit there grew trees and shrubs, a dense wood-

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land inhabited by all kinds of game and creatures of the wild. Between the cliffs and the sea rolled the wide stretch of impoverished grass too poor to be used for grazing, useless for cultivation, deserted alike by wave and fertile earth.

Arriving near the cliffs, Temperance looked up into their seared and furrowed face and called to the sand martins. They lived there by the hundred. Deep had they burrowed into the soft face of the cliff, making their little homes snug, and neither rain nor storm disturbed them. Year after year they returned to their fortress, and Temperance was always there to welcome them back, and also to wish them Godspeed when they left for their perilous journey across the sea. Very timid were the sand martins, but they had become accustomed to Temperance, and innumerable black and glossy heads peeped out of rough-hewn windows as the girl drew near. Their flight was so elegant, too. Off they went—dark, fluttering things of grace; they turned, they flashed silver, and all came back with their white undersides gleaming. Temperance clapped her hands for the pleasure of seeing them curve and swoop, and slowly she approached the hole near the bottom of the cliff.

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Seating herself upon the grass, she took the basket from her shoulders and began talking to Richard, who brightened up a little and regarded the sand martins with an envious eye. He enjoyed raiding their furrows for eggs, but dared not do so while Temperance was near.

"It's no good looking so sly, because they are all hatched," said Temperance. "Besides, I have food in plenty. Rabbit pasty, bread, cheese, a bottle of ale, a good crab, and apples that are not quite ripe but of an excellent flavour. There is nobody about, so what shall we do with all this food, Richard?"

"Bring it, I pray you, a little nearer the cliff," replied a muffled voice.

"Indeed you are right," laughed Temperance. "'Tis wiser to sit in the shade, with the sun so hot as it is today," and she moved up to the cliff and leaned back against it close to the dark hole round which the roving-sailor clung in festoons of green and purple.

One by one she offered her dainties to the hole, and a long, smooth hand took them in.

"I have waited for you a long, long time," said the voice.

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"I could not come sooner. Have you dried your clothes?"

"Partly. I dared not leave them out in the sun. My coat is still wet and my boots full of crabs."

"Give them to me. There is no one about."

As Temperance was spreading the coat in the sun at her feet, and scraping the sand from the interior of the elegant boots, the voice from the cliffs called to her hastily.

"Hi! there is no room for the raven here! Knave, be off!"

"I was taught never to speak with my mouth full," laughed the girl. "Richard, come here."

"You were most excellently well brought up, no doubt! Maiden, how can I thank you? I would kiss your hand in gratitude and go on my knees to you."

"On your knees to a witch's serving-maid?"

"Aye, and proud to do it."

"When the King returns, maybe you will find me a place at Court! It would be much to my liking. Methinks I should make a good sooth-sayer and prophesy amazing adventures for the Court ladies—and gentlemen, too, for that matter!"

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As she leaned back against the cliff she felt almost gay; she could just discern a dark shadow looming in the obscurity of the hole.

"Dare I come out?" asked the young stranger.
"I am sore cramped."

"Better not. Go farther back and you can walk upright."

"Then I could not see you, and I assure you I have had sufficient of my own company. Are you not hot with that thick black hood upon your head?"

"Yes, but it is not modest in my station of life to show the hair. We leave that for the Court ladies!"

"But they seldom venture abroad unmasked, while you are barefaced."

"There is no accounting for custom."

"Take off your hood."

"No."

"What is your name?"

"Temperance."

"Temperance?"

"That is what I said—Temperance Farncombe."

There was a long silence during which Temperance waited for the young man to give her

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his name, but as he did not address her she became impatient.

"Well," she said, "are you not going to tell me your name?"

"It is better that you should not know. Should anything go amiss and you were questioned, you could say truthfully that you knew it not."

"I would never tell it."

"I would not risk harming you."

It seemed to Temperance that even their voices had changed suddenly and the merry banter ceased. The girl reflected upon the harm which the young man had already done her, but she would not add to his troubles by telling him what had befallen Mother Ursula. Richard, observing the sorrowful expression of her face, walked clumsily away up the front of the cliff in search of young rabbits which he knew inhabited the top, and the girl had not the heart to call him back. For the sake of something to do she ate a little green apple, and the young man murmured that the pasty was excellent. Long and strained was the silence that fell upon them; Temperance could think of nothing to say, and suddenly a hoarse croak from Richard

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rang out, and it was followed immediately by a piercing scream.

In a flash Temperance swept the coat and boots in the hole and, springing to her feet, ran a little way and looked eagerly to the top of the cliff.

"Annis!" she cried. "Where are you?"

"I thought you must be somewhere hereabouts when I saw Richard," replied Annis. "He scared me nearly out of my skin."

"What are you doing up there?"

"Wandering in the woods. I have the spleen."

"Come down here and we will go home together."

"Oh, I dare not come down the cliff! Besides, there is Richard. Oh, Temperance, when I heard that Mother Ursula ——"

"Hush! There is a way down farther along; I will show you."

She ran to a sort of gully in the cliff, and scrambling up the steep incline joined Annis, who was standing at the top, waiting for her assistance. Putting her arm round her friend's neck Temperance whispered into her ear, and Annis's eyes became round with excitement and fear.

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"Down there in the cave?" murmured Annis.
"The young man who was in our house? They say he is the Duke of York. That I do not believe, for he would not have come to my father."

"No, neither do I."

"What are you going to do?"

"Help him if I can."

"But—but I must tell my father! The soldiers have come to search for him!"

"Oh, Annis! I should not have told you!"

"Indeed you should not! What have you done! It places me in a terrible position."

Temperance fell back in utter dismay, and the girls stood facing one another blankly in that steep and narrow way.

"Because of our friendship, Annis, keep this secret from your father," pleaded Temperance.
"Never before has anything come between us, and if you betray the masked stranger, how can we be the same to one another again?"

Annis began to weep a little.

"If he be the enemy of my country, it is my duty to give him up," she said.

"But because of him my mistress has gone to prison and I am unprotected. Oh, Annis, you

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should not have betrayed your father's secret to me in the first place. I told Mother Ursula, too. I do not ask your help—only your silence.”

“I cannot tell lies if they question me.”

“’Tis the first favor I have asked you. Think, Annis, he carries a letter to the King—our King—your King. Yes, I repeat it—*your King*. One day he will return and then—— Mercy me! Who is that singing?”

“Tobacco I love and Tobacco I’ll take,
And hope good tobacco I ne’er shall forsake!”

The hearty voice echoing through the wood stopped to rebuke some one in good round language, then continued the song to the accompaniment of much crushing noise in the undergrowth. The girls listened breathlessly as the voice came nearer,

“With pipe after pipe we still keep in motion,
In puffing and smoking like guns on the ocean,
And when we are out we charge ’em and then
We stop ’em and ram ’em and recharge again.
Since we on tobacco can keep ourselves sound,
Let Bacchus or Venus in Leathe be drowned!”

“The man with the bear,” whispered Temperance.

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Annis wiped her eyes hastily, and through the bushes came the man with the bear. His handsome face was wreathed with good humor, his gold earrings glittered, and he greeted the girls heartily. Very keenly did he scan the sweet face of Annis Twisden, and the color stole into it as she turned away and began to stumble down the gully.

"This is the second time I have seen you weep, Mistress Annis," he said. "Yet you looked gay enough the first day I beheld you—when the bear danced."

"I was not weeping," returned Annis, indignantly. "And if I were, it has naught to do with a soldier who—who breeds discontent in the town."

"Guard your bear, master!" cried Temperance.

But her warning was too late, for as the bear went ambling down the gully after Annis the girl screamed, Richard chattered, and Temperance, to get out of the huge creature's way, went speeding down the cliff as if her feet were running away with her. At the bottom she stopped, and panting for breath looked up to watch the bear leader help Annis down, while the bear,

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quite unconcerned, stumbled about till he lost his footing and rolled calmly the rest of the way.

Even Annis could not help laughing, and off trotted the bear in so great a hurry that his master was obliged to run after him, making unsuccessful grabs at the chain which trickled along in the dry grass. But as the bear paused to examine something near the hole in the cliff the man captured him, and retrieved a small black object from the animal's mouth.

"What have we here?" he cried, waving the object to the girls. "Ha, ha! Speaks this of romance or tragedy?"

It was a gauntlet—a black glove beautifully embroidered with seed pearls, but half sodden with sea water.

CHAPTER IX

Temperance Tastes the Sweet and the Bitter Mint



TEMPERANCE AND ANNIS regarded with dismay the glove swinging between the man's brown fingers, and neither knew what to say. Temperance was sure it had fallen from the pocket of the stranger's coat, and would have told the bear leader so had not the presence of Annis prevented her.

Annis guessed to whom it belonged, but remained tongue-tied, for both her heart and her mind were in a whirl. Standing there gazing at

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the glove, strange thoughts passed through her head, and that poor, sodden, once beautiful gauntlet had a very odd effect upon her. She felt that God's good sun shone so kindly on them all—beggar, bear leader, traitor, and farmer's daughter, aye, and even upon Richard and the flickering sand martins—that there was no desire at all in her heart save to be happy. Oh, she wanted so much to be happy, and could she be so if she brought herself to hunt out a poor fugitive? Maybe he was doing no wrong and it was no affair of hers. In some ways her feelings were less acute than those of Temperance, and she could not blaze up like a flame at the mention of the King's name, nor could she smolder like sullen fire in the presence of her enemies. The hand of persecution had not touched Annis Twisden, and she cared not so very passionately who ruled her beloved country as long as she was left in peace to enjoy its beauty and there were no more wars. She was of a very sweet and gentle nature, and hated quarrels.

"The glove is mine," she said, quite unexpectedly, and stretched out her hand for it.

"Yours?" inquired the soldier, lifting his

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black eyebrows whimsically. "Ho, Mistress Annis, so you treasure the gauntlet of a cavalier, do you? A keepsake, most likely. You—the daughter of a faithful soldier of the Commonwealth!"

Annis did not answer, but taking the glove from him she began drawing out the fingers thoughtfully, and Temperance pressed her arm affectionately. Temperance was very quick to understand; she guessed exactly what that little action of Annis's signified, and her face glowed with gratitude in consequence.

"I will not have her teased," said Temperance. "And now, good soldier, we will leave you."

"Nay, stay a little," he pleaded. "You promised to be my friend, bewitching maiden, and I have had no opportunity of speaking to you. In the town the very walls have ears, but the sand martins tell no tales. Surely we have something of interest to say to one another."

A trifle scared was the glance Annis flashed at Temperance, but the latter's face was stern and set. Temperance fixed her clear brown eyes upon the bear leader, and she glanced at his limp arm, his grimy clothes, his bold, laughing

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face, and from that her eyes traveled to the dusty, patient bear standing beside him. Then, as if satisfied, she sat down upon the grass and leaned against the cliff near the hole. Annis seated herself beside her friend, and the bear leader threw himself upon the ground, and slipping his foot into the iron ring at the end of the bear's chain he looked at Richard, who surveyed the bear from a distance.

During the long silence Annis was perplexed and uncomfortable. She envied Temperance that proud and independent spirit which was as much at ease in the presence of princes as among beggars, and glanced anxiously at the bear leader.

"Are you my friend, Mistress Annis?" he asked, quickly.

"I am," she nodded.

"May I kiss your hand on it?"

Very timidly Annis stretched out her hand and the soldier touched it with his lips, but the girl was greatly flustered, for she was not accustomed to such manners, and it appeared to her an incongruous action on the part of a beggar. Suppose her father beheld a beggarman, a

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discharged soldier, speaking to her as if he were her equal!

"Tell me, Temperance Farncombe, where you have concealed the man who carries a letter to the King," demanded the soldier.

"In yonder cave," she replied, pointing to the hole. "My mistress bid me trust you."

"You have done well. Those who serve the King are not all abroad, and many walk in curious paths of life. Ho, friend, have you ever heard of Andrada—the man with the bear?"

"Yes," came the muffled voice from the cave. "I also was told to trust you, Andrada. My life is in your hands."

"And mine in yours! Methinks the whole four of us are in jeopardy, for that matter. From henceforth we four stand or fall together. Nevertheless, the witch maiden has the advantage over us, for she can use magic while we are but poor mortals."

"Temperance is no witch!" burst out Annis.

"But she has sufficient sense to know that the moment has arrived when her presence is no longer necessary," said Temperance. "Stranger, I leave you in the safe keeping of the man with the bear."

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"Will you not come tomorrow?" asked the anxious voice.

"It will depend whether I am passing this way. Nevertheless, I will not let you starve—maybe that thought is troubling you! Fare you well."

Annis and the soldier had also risen, and having placed her basket on her back and called to Richard, Temperance nodded to the bear leader.

"Farewell," she said. "If you have anything to say to me come to the cottage in broad daylight. I am suspected of everything of which one can be suspected, and at night it is most likely the cottage will be watched. Aye, by day also, for that matter, so I pray you be careful. Come Annis."

"Farewell," murmured Annis, and then she hesitated and looked perplexed, and finally she approached the hole in the cliff and said, timidly: "I wish you Godspeed, stranger. Think not ill of me because I am your enemy's daughter. We cannot all think alike. I will do you no harm."

She ran after Temperance without waiting for an answer, but had not gone far when she

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remembered the glove which she still held in her hand.

"Temperance—what shall I do with it?" she gasped.

"Take it back. 'Tis most unsafe."

"You take it back!"

"Indeed I will do no such thing. You claimed it, therefore it is your responsibility."

So back went Annis, and the soldier advanced a little way to meet her.

"The glove," she panted.

"So it is not a keepsake?"

She shook her head. "I was distressed that my father raised his whip to strike you—a soldier like you who has lost his arm in the service of his country."

"I am accustomed to such treatment. Do not despise me, Mistress Annis, but I must confess to you that my arm is sound. It is a trick to gain sympathy."

"Oh! Oh dear! Are you a Spaniard?"

"Nay, I am an Englishman. Andrada is the bear's name, but my dark looks and my long association with the bear have caused me to be known as Andrada from Chatham to York, from York to London. Smile, Mistress Annis. Your

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face was not made for the doldrums, and it distresses me greatly to think that I have helped to bring anxiety upon you."

But Annis turned and fled after Temperance, who upbraided her teasingly for being so long, and wondered what she could find to talk about to a bear leader.

"Oh, Temperance," murmured the girl, "since the masked stranger came to our house a terrible feeling has been upon me that my life has gone out of my hands. Sometimes I am glad, sometimes I am sorry, but I know that I am as helpless as the thistle seed that flies in the wind. Whither I am floating I know not. It is as if I had no control of my actions. Why did I go over to the enemy?"

"Because he is not an enemy. You are troubled by the events of these last few days, and you think things that are not true. Like a thistle-down, indeed! You with your goodly farm and sheltered life. 'Tis I am the thistle seed, and you the sweet honey bee, Annis, living in your well-ordered skep, respected and loved."

"Nevertheless, I feel mighty uneasy in my well-ordered skep! Do you know whether the

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man who calls himself Andrada is truly what he pretends to be?"

"I know nothing of him. Mother Ursula told me to trust him, but I know less of him than you."

"Do you know the masked stranger's name?"

"No—and my curiosity be tingling! I wish he were safely out of the country."

"So do I. And I wish you could come to the farm, Temperance, while—while you are alone. It gives me the shudders to think of you there with only the sea to keep you company."

"I am not afraid with Richard. Tomorrow morning I shall go up to the prison again. Shall I see you?"

"Maybe, but I shall not go to the cave on any pretext. We must part here, for I cannot cross the marsh with you lest my father sees me."

Temperance thanked her again for her help, said a few encouraging words, then went on her way alone. She was troubled because of Annis; she felt guilty at having drawn the girl into the stranger's secret. Dearie me! Annis had enough troubles without shouldering another! And if anything untoward happened to Annis, Temperance felt that it would be her worst trouble

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of all. She remembered the picture in the bowl of water—Annis running with the tears upon her face—and she shivered in spite of the warmth, and longed for Mother Ursula. How would it all end?

Opening the cottage door, the girl went cautiously in, and made an examination of the place, for she had got to the state when she trusted nobody. Into the cupboard she looked, up the chimney she poked a long pole, then she nailed up the opening in the wall in her room with a good heavy piece of wood. That done, she felt safer, and wishing to be up betimes she went to bed early.

The following day was one of suspense and anxiety. Not one breath of news did she glean of Mother Ursula, and she saw neither Annis nor Andrada. Toward noon soldiers marched into the town, and wild indeed were the rumors which flew from lip to lip. Great generals had turned traitors, the Duke of York was ready to take command of a rebel army, the arms of the Commonwealth had been torn down from the Royal Exchange, General Monk sat like an eagle up in Scotland, making ready to pounce, but which way he would swoop no one knew—

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such were some of the rumors which came to Temperance's ears as she lingered in the little town, hoping against hope to hear something of her mistress.

It was four o'clock in the afternoon when she turned her feet homeward, but she went back through the woods in order to pass the sand martins' cliffs; however, as she perceived soldiers searching the grass inch by inch, she was seized with fear and turned back. Well, the masked stranger would have no food that day. Temperance was thinking of him hiding there under the very noses of the soldiers, and praying silently for his safety, when Colonel Copplestone rode by. He was riding at a gallop, and as he flashed past her she thought she had never seen a man with so drawn and anxious a face. His eyes were staring out of his head, his mouth was set, and he rode in the direction of Master Twisden's farm. Temperance took to her heels and followed him as quickly as her feet would carry her. A strange excitement filled her, and from the crest of the hill she saw him enter the farm; then he was hidden from her view. On she plodded, and round the farm she lingered, hoping to see him emerge, and perhaps gather

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something from his face; but she was doomed to disappointment. As dusk fell she dared not stay any longer, for fear of attracting attention, so home she went, and bolted herself securely in the cottage.

The next morning she was not surprised when three soldiers arrived and demanded entrance. Holding herself very aloof, she told them to search where they liked, then went and sat upon the bank of shingle while they were making their investigations. She heard their raucous laughter and rude remarks, but for once she was glad of her reputation as a witch, for it protected her from questions. They had no desire to enter into conversation with that strangely beautiful maiden sitting upon the stones with the raven perched on her shoulder, for they had been told in the town that she not only possessed the evil eye, but turned into a hare at midnight. The soldiers contented themselves with putting the cottage in disorder and helping themselves to whatever they fancied.

One took the exquisite little cage made of bamboo, another the old pewter tankard, the third stuffed his pockets with whatever he could

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lay his hands on, and between them they emptied the cask of ale which stood behind the door.

"A good morning's work, my pretty gentlemen," muttered 'Temperance through her teeth as they walked off toward Jeremy Twisden's farm.

As she surveyed the cottage she could have wept bitterly, but instead she bolted the door upon the disorder, and leaving Richard behind her took her basket of sweet and bitter mint upon her arm, and set off for the sand martins' cliff. Her blood was boiling, and the conduct of the soldiers had so enraged her that she felt utterly reckless, and determined that the fugitive should be supplied with food that day.

"My beautiful little cage," she muttered to herself. "Come all the way from China, and crossed the seas only to be broken up by the loutish hand of that soldier's child. And I loved it, and the man who gave it to Mother Ursula treasured it; it was made as a palace for a singing grasshopper."

Savagely she bit at a sprig of bitter mint, and it was only the sight of the sand martins curving so gracefully, lifting their sharp, joyous voices in the morning air, that calmed her anger.

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There was no human being in sight, so, taking a knife from her basket, she went looking for dandelions close to the cliff. As a warning to the masked stranger she sang the "Beggar's Song," but so troubled was her mind that she knew not what she was saying.

"Come, come away! Why do we stay?
We have no debt or rent to pay;
No bargains or accounts to make;
Nor land nor lease to let or take.
Or if we had should that remove us
When all the world's our own before us,
And where we pass and make resort
It is our kingdom and our court."

As she approached the cave she lingered, and listened.

"Come, come away! Why do we stay?" she sang.

"Fear makes us all cowards," replied a whisper from within. "I could not be sure, witch maiden, that so sweet a singing voice was truly yours. An hour ago soldiers were searching within a few yards of me."

"Aye; that is why I could not come yesterday. I have brought you food. Are you well, stranger?"

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"I am stiff with the dampness of this place, but my appetite is not affected, therefore I must be in excellent health! But the sound of your voice, witch maiden, is more welcome than the flowers in spring."

"Because I bring you food!"

"Why do you catch me up so sharply? I know that you risk your life each time you come here, and I also know that 'tis not for *me* that you do this service, but for the King. Nevertheless, it pains me that you always give meaning to my words which I do not intend."

"I have an exceedingly bad temper—specially this morning. Now I am going to sit near the hole and pass the victuals in to you bit by bit. I must be cautious, though there is no soul in sight."

"Tell me, is all well with you?"

"Very well—judging, of course, by my appetite! I have eaten half a honeycomb that Annis gave me; I have a very sweet tooth. Have you tasted this new cane sugar, stranger? 'Tis too expensive for us to buy, but I hear it will soon take the place of honey in the world."

"You appear mightily interested in the world."

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"Yes, because I have seen so little of it. Andrada, the man with the bear, has traveled far. Think of it—all the way to New Amsterdam and back. I can scarce believe it."

"If you believe half Andrada tells you it will be sufficient. His tongue runs away with him."

"Only when he allows it to do so; it does not run alone."

"Witch maiden, you are very wise for one so young."

"My life has taught me to keep my eyes open, if you call that wisdom! And my name is Temperance."

"Temperance? I much prefer witch maiden—it has a sweet, wild tang."

"You be the first to say so!"

"Temperance does not suit you. Temperance should be a shy, demure little gray maid sitting by the fire embroidering a bonnet, but you are a flame. When I saw you that first evening you took my breath away. I was afraid of you there in the dusk with your hair like a flame around you. I mistook you for Circe."

"Circe? I know not the lady, but I doubt whether the allusion be a compliment. I am very ignorant, stranger; I can neither read nor

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write, and have no learning. Now I must be going, and all the time I have lingered here you have not said one word that I wanted to hear."

"And I have not said a quarter of what I desired to say! What do you wish to hear?"

"Your name. Your destination. Your conversation with Andrada. Where you have come from. Oh, a thousand things! I am inquisitive as well as sharp tongued."

There was a long pause during which Temperance nibbled at a sprig of sweet mint which she selected carefully from her basket of herbs, and prepared to go on her way up to Winchelsea. She was turning away when the voice from the cave spoke again, and it had lost its merry tone.

"My name I will not tell you lest it should harm you to know. My destination is Holland. My conversation with Andrada has shown me that the King is much nearer to his throne than even I guessed. But one little slip in the wheel of fate and all may be lost. Witch maiden, 'tis as if a great unseen work were going on all over this land of ours beneath that which we see with our eyes, but the time is not ripe yet to unveil our schemes. Trust me—and give me a charm to

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protect me, I pray you. Tomorrow if you come I may be gone."

"My friend, I wish you Godspeed! Take this; 'tis all I have, but my thoughts will be with you."

She thrust a bunch of vervain into his hand, then raced off like the wind. Up blazed her joy, and all her troubles were forgotten as one great hope shone before her—the King would return to his own! Soon she would shout with the multitudes, "Long Live King Charles the Second!" She remembered how her baby lips had repeated those words after her father long years ago, and since that moment she had never uttered them aloud. But soon she would do so. Then her father would not have fallen in vain, Annis would not have given her promise in vain—nay, and Mother Ursula would not have striven in vain. Mother Ursula, who had sold cures to Puritan and Papist, Roundhead and Cavalier, friend and enemy, but whose *heart* was the King's.

Radiant with joy, Temperance ran on; her hair escaped from under her hood, her exquisite face flushed like that of a rose, and her feet danced with the flowers in the grass. The King

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would return to his own—and the stranger was a very pleasant young man! Into Winchelsea she went, still running, and to the prison she made her way. There was a crowd about the doors, and as Temperance pushed her way to the front she beheld Mother Ursula with her hands pinioned behind her back, and her gray hair falling in disarray about her bare head. Soldiers walked before her, and Colonel Coplestone and Jeremy Twisden followed hard on her heels.

CHAPTER X

The Ordeal by Water



“HE WITCH!” SHOUTED the crowd. “Come, see the witch ducked! The witch! The witch!”

“Hang her!” screamed a voice. “Drowning be too good for her!”

“Nay, but she will never drown,” declared another. “Water is holy and will never take a witch. Mark my words, she will float.”

“Then she is doomed indeed! If the water refuse her, then ’tis a proof that she is a

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witch, and nothing can save her from the gallows."

Temperance pushed herself farther to the front, and the people made way for her; aye, they pointed their fingers at her, nodded their heads sagely, and turned up their eyes to heaven. Lordy! lordy! a pretty couple were the witch and her serving-maid. Bits of talk flew about, strange facts regarding the witch were related, but Temperance heard nothing. She worked her way as close to Mother Ursula as possible, but as the jailors kept the crowd off she was obliged to run along on the edge of the assembly, and the jailors marched quickly.

Gone was the damask blush from Temperance Farncombe's face, and it was a lily-pale countenance which looked sternly out from under the black hood. Never a word did she utter, for her eyes and mind were too busy to permit her tongue to frame speech. She noticed that Master Jeremy Twisden was very pleased with himself, and walked boldly behind Mother Ursula, with a sly smile upon his lips. But not so Colonel Copplestone. He walked boldly, it is true, for he was a fine, bold figure of a man, specially when he took the trouble to be tidy in his dress,

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but now his face was grim and he did not appear to find the occasion as savory as he had expected. Sullenly he stalked along behind his victim, his eyes staring out from his red and puffy face, and there was not so much as a button of his buff leather coat unfastened, nor a throng undone. His top-boots shone, his hand in the thick leather gauntlet gripped the hilt of his sword, and he looked neither to the right nor to the left.

Temperance wondered why he had troubled to make himself so fine for the occasion; considering his usual appearance was slovenly, it pointed to uneasiness on his part—almost as if his mind were so agitated that he had tried to forget his worry in making a meticulous toilet. But why? The girl clenched her hands in her effort to solve the thoughts which were passing in Colonel Copplestone's head, and she turned her bright, pleading eyes upon her mistress.

Neither by word nor by glance did Mother Ursula convey to her serving-maid that she saw her there in the crowd. Apparently unconcerned, the witch tramped smartly along in the dust, her dirty voluminous skirts dragging, her long, thin hands sticking out behind her, the

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thick rope bound tightly round her bony wrists, the long, ominous ends looped up and knotted loosely about her neck. Her face was inscrutable; even Temperance, who knew her so well, gathered nothing from it. It was dark, and as blank as the marsh puddles at night. Lank gray hair fell over the fierce black eyes, the mouth seemed to smile as if it knew a secret, and the tall, lean old figure walked erect and at a good round pace. Could she see the future, and did she know that there was no way of averting it? Temperance would have given much to know, but she determined to be worthy of her mistress. Maybe she was a witch, but she faced the consequences of her misdeeds bravely, and Temperance could not judge her.

Hurrying along with her tongue parched, her limbs turned as it were to water, Temperance now fixed her attention on the comments of the crowd, for she learned nothing from scanning the principal actors.

She heard people say how Mother Ursula had been the cause of much sickness among cattle; how she made wax figures, and buried them in the ground, thus causing the men, or women, or children represented by them to pine and die.

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Some had seen her at night flying over the marsh on a broomstick to keep an appointment with the devil, and it was known to all that no bees would stay in her garden. The bees knew her right well! Only the pure in heart could touch bees, for they were heavenly creatures, gathering their very life from flowers, and hating all evil things. A ragged gown, breath smelling of onions—and the witch was known to eat quantities of onions—violent movements, why the bees detested such things, and they were a good proof against Mother Ursula, for not a skep had ever been seen in her herb garden by the shore. Temperance glanced at Dame Goody Pepper puffing and blowing along with the rest, hoping she would put in a word about her own ability to handle bees and thus reflect a little goodness back to her mistress, but the portly dame only fanned herself with her linen handkerchief, and looked the other way. As they neared the pond close by the tanner's yard, who should join them but Andrada, the bear, and Annis Twisden. The trio came running down the lane from the direction of the woods which spread on the top of the cliffs, and upon seeing the crowd Andrada gave a shout of joy and, out-

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running Annis, came panting along, with the great clumsy bear floundering beside him. He made quite a stir.

"What is it?" he shouted. "Have you caught the mysterious fugitive?"

"No!" they called back. "'Tis the witch going to be ducked! Come and see!"

Andrada made more noise than the entire crowd, for he yelled and shouted, and thanked his stars that he had arrived at the right moment, for never before had he witnessed a ducking. Off he went, calling to all the people to come out and not miss the opportunity, and even the soldiers came running; one might imagine it was a feast day, so gay and excited did the crowd become. But Annis was as white as the hawthorn blossom in May, and so scared that she could not speak. Her hand was on her heart and her eyes on her father's face. Most strange was Annis Twisden; even in her terrible anxiety Temperance knew that something had happened to Annis, for she appeared dazed, almost like a maiden bewitched.

But Temperance had no time to think of her friend, for Master Jeremy Twisden called a halt. All around the pond they collected, and so great

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was the desire to see well that there were many scuffles, and not a few people ran the risk of being tumbled into the dirty water in their anxiety to get a good view of the proceedings.

Soldiers, however, cleared a little space, and into it marched Mother Ursula with her two accusers, and the jailors stood round, waiting for their orders. Temperance pushed her way to the water's edge, and all the time she could hear the rollicking voice of Andrada calling to the stragglers to hurry or they would not see the witch ducked, and she was conscious of the still figure of Annis standing with her hands crossed upon the bosom of her fresh pintado gown, for all the world like a maiden spellbound.

But now Colonel Coppelstone was calling for silence, and giving an account of Mother Ursula's sins. So Temperance listened, striving to find something which would trip him up in his accusations. He related how Mother Ursula had cursed him, and how the raven, her familiar, had attacked him while he was performing his duty. He declared the raven to be no ordinary bird, but a spirit of evil that the witch kept for the purpose of carrying out her wicked machinations. And while in her cottage that night he

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had seen a black bowl filled with water in which she read the future, therefore by water she should be tried. Was not the ordeal by water infallible? Water was a holy element created before earth; it was a pure lymph, incorruptible, and would receive no evil spirit. Therefore Ursula Harbottle was to be tried by water. If she floated or swam she would be proved a witch, and by the Law and the Church a witch was a felon; if she sank and the water received her, they would know her to be innocent, for water could not lie. There was sufficient evidence on every side, said Colonel Cottlestone, to warrant the water ordeal, and if any person had somewhat to say let him come forward now or else hold his tongue forever.

Then Master Jeremy Twisden spoke. He related how the witch had overlooked his cattle and caused sickness among his sheep. Worse still, she had set a spell on him to prevent the hole in his forehead from healing. Each time this wound showed signs of healing, the witch crossed his path, cast her evil eye upon him, and he was immediately afflicted with violent pains in his head. She also sold charms which the innocent cast into that venomous liquid

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known as coffee, and she was believed to possess large quantities of that un-Christian brew known as China Drink. And during the years she had lived upon the marshes never a tear had fallen from her eyes; she could not weep, therefore she was a witch.

Many others spoke after Jeremy Twisden, and terrible were the accusations brought against Ursula Harbottle; Temperance trembled at the knees, knowing it was impossible to prove her mistress innocent, but one thing amazed her. Neither Colonel Copplestone nor Jeremy Twisden accused the witch of harboring a fugitive; that was her greatest offense, yet it was not mentioned. Temperance put her hand over her eyes in her effort to fathom the situation, and suddenly the voice of Andrada rang out loud and clear.

"She has harbored an abettor of Charles Stuart!" he cried. "One night when I was sleeping upon the marshes I saw a dark shadow creep out from Master Twisden's farm and slink along to the cottage. Who be this stranger? Command Mother Ursula to tell us his name and where she has secreted him. What is the good of employing soldiers to search the town and the shore if the

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fugitive is protected by the witch? Give us his name and whereabouts say I."

"Aye, ask her! Put her to the torture till she tells!" cried one. "Who is this mysterious fugitive?"

"'Tis James Stuart, the Duke of York!" shouted another.

"Maybe the King himself!"

"Or Sir Godfrey Vane—the King's friend. The name! The name!"

"'Tis known that Sir Godfrey is always working for the restoration of Prince Charles!"

"Silence!" thundered Colonel Copplestone, for he could not bear to hear Prince Charles referred to openly as the King. "I will conduct this affair as I wish. I have questioned the woman concerning the fugitive, and am satisfied that he was not in her cottage; I searched it myself, and sent soldiers again this morning. This is a trial for witchcraft, not treason. I have no case against the woman for treason. I command that Ursula Harbottle be bound hand and foot, and thrown to the mercy of the water. Proceed!"

Temperance felt giddy, and clapped her hand over her mouth to prevent herself from speak-

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ing. Torrents of words flew swiftly to her tongue, but as she had received no sign from that tall figure which the jailors were binding with the rope, she remained as silent as her mistress. What was the good of speaking? Nothing she could say would pacify the crowd or Colonel Coplestone, and it seemed to her that only a miracle could save Ursula Harbottle. If her mistress sank and was drowned, then she was no witch; if she floated, the gallows awaited her, or most likely she would be dispatched there and then. Faint with horror, Temperance watched the proceedings, for she could not take her eyes off her mistress, and the shouts of the assembly caused her head to ring with strange noises.

She was dimly aware of Annis calling out that she could not see the witch ducked, and of the apothecary's daughter throwing a fit in the midst of the crowd and being dragged away, but nothing really mattered to Temperance then. Had the King himself ridden by, her feet would not have stirred to meet him.

They fastened Mother Ursula's ankles together, tied up her knees, and bound her feet and hands behind her back. Like a bundle of rusty black garments she lay upon the ground,

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her dark face rigid as an image carved in ivory, and suddenly the crowd ceased shouting and silence fell upon the assembly.

"Pitch her in," commanded the Colonel.

Two jailors seized hold of Ursula Harbottle, swung her between them for a moment, and judging the distance to perfection flung her into the middle of the pond. Up shot the water like a spirit enraged; high into the air it spouted, then fell back upon the crowd about the bank in great glittering drops and splashes. It seemed as if pandemonium were suddenly let loose, and the crowd yelled.

"She sinks!"

"She swims!"

"She tries to save herself."

"She is a witch—'tis proved!"

"The water receives her."

"She is innocent."

"She sinks—the water has taken her."

Never once did Ursula Harbottle rise to the surface. The water seethed and whirled around her, sending out great circles toward the banks, swamping the feet of those who stood there as it lapped up from the middle of the pond and

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broke into those mysterious rings which spread as they moved, and were lost upon the bank.

Ankle deep in the water, with her hood pushed back and the great mass of her riotous hair gleaming in the sun, stood Temperance, and suddenly her voice rang out like a clarion bell. There was command and authority in that voice, but never a sign of fear nor a note of supplication. Her arms were lifted high above her head and all eyes were turned upon her.

"The water has judged!" she cried. "Ursula Harbottle is proved to be innocent of witchcraft. There is no law to prevent me from taking her from the water which has received her! Hinder me, and you shall be tried as murderers!"

Into the pond she plunged, diving, swimming, shaking her golden head, plunging again; it was not deep water, and very soon she appeared with a great black bundle in her arms. To the shore she waded, and nobody dared stay her, though there were some who appealed to Colonel Copplestone.

"Let her be," he said. "The water has judged."

The people fell back before Temperance and her burden, but Andrada gripped her shoulder

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with his sound hand and pulled her up the slippery bank, yet all the time he was laughing and making jokes. Placing Mother Ursula upon the grass, the girl asked for a knife, which Andrada supplied, and with a firm hand she cut the ropes and released her mistress. Then she smoothed the gray hair from the ivory brow, rubbed the cold hands, and murmured soft words into Mother Ursula's ear. Andrada moved off, the crowd edged away, and turning her head, from which the water streamed, Temperance cried out:

"Is there one among you who, for the love of God, will bring me a bowl of brandy?"

There was no reply, but presently Dame Goody Pepper came panting along and, stooping down, put something into Temperance's hand. It was a little silver bowl having two handles, and it was exquisitely chased. The last time Temperance had seen that bowl it was resting on the edge of the polished dining-table in her father's house, and she, standing near her father's knee, was wrinkling her little nose in disgust, for she did not like the smell of brandy. As she recognized the bowl she felt stunned for a moment, but reflecting that it had probably been

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rescued from the ruins of Farncombe Hall, she put it to Mother Ursula's lips and begged her to drink.

"'Tis my best brandy," murmured Dame Pepper.

"I am very grateful," whispered Temperance.

"Take a sip yourself, my girl."

"Nay; I must keep my brain clear."

"Think you she is much the worse for the ducking?"

"Bemazed. Thank God she be very strong. Look, she is coming round."

Mother Ursula moved, opened her eyes, closed them again, and when Temperance put the bowl to her lips again she drank a little of the brandy, and then raised her hand to indicate that she had taken sufficient.

"With all my heart I thank you, Dame Pepper," said Temperance, returning the exquisite little brandy bowl to the portly dame, who ambled off, remarking that Ursula Harbottle's escape was as near a miracle as anything she had ever seen.

"Are you better, mistress?" asked Temperance. "Can you stand?"

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"My clothes are heavy and my head light," she muttered.

Temperance squeezed as much water as she could from the heavy black garments, and after awhile she assisted Mother Ursula to her feet.

"Stay," she said. "I will go and hire a cart. We can pay for it; the gold pieces in the rafters have not been touched."

"Ursula Harbottle will walk home. Give me your arm, Temperance; 'tis all the support I need. We will take our time."

"'Tis a long way."

"I will rest when necessary. The gold pieces will no doubt be required for more important occasions."

Slowly they made their way down the hill and toward the marshes, Mother Ursula leaning heavily on the girl's arm, and only fragments of talk escaped their lips now and again. They rested often on the way, and the kindly sun poured down upon them, warming them, giving them courage.

"I trusted you to save me, Temperance, and you did not fail me."

"You are cold; you must go to bed, and I will put hot dishclouts on your feet."

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"What is that? I hear the sound of fire—cannon-fire."

"Fighting in the Channel most likely."

Once, when Ursula Harbottle was lying on the marsh, too weary to stir, she chuckled maliciously in spite of her discomfort.

"I played for my life," she murmured, "and won it. 'Twas all I could do."

"Tell me how, mistress," whispered Temperance.

"I struck a bargain with Colonel Coppleson. I forced him to give me the trial by water instead of sending me before the judges; otherwise I would have spoken. Had I been tried in court, nothing could have saved me from the gallows, but I would have disclosed the name of the fugitive and brought Jeremy Twisden to trial, and the fine Colonel to sorrow and disgrace. Help me up, Temperance."

On they trudged, and suddenly a volley of shots rang out over the marshes.

"Down by the sand martins' cliffs," murmured Temperance. "Courage, mistress; we are nearly home. Listen! Richard knows you are coming."

CHAPTER XI

Tangles, Secrets and Hopes



SAINT THOMAS'S CLOCK struck seven; like music from the town beneath the sea the sweet sound came drifting lightly over the marshes, swept along in the wake of a little breeze. Temperance lifted her head quickly.

"I must have been dozing," she muttered. "Is my hair dry?"

Pushing her hands up into the mass of rough curls which fell about her shoulders, she leaned back against the lintel of the door, and glanced

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into the cottage where Mother Ursula was sleeping peacefully.

"Mercy on us—what a day!" she sighed wearily.

Stretching herself upon the doorstep, she placed her bare feet in the last little ray of sun, and glanced at the garments spread out to dry on the fence. She was dressed in Dame Goody Pepper's gray woolen petticoat, and the old tartan plaid of some Scottish soldier was draped over her shoulders, crossed in front, and knotted behind.

After that terrible scene by the pond the peace of the marsh was very comforting, but it was only now, when Saint Thomas's clock had struck seven, that Temperance could relax, and it seemed to her that the gentle peace touched her like the wing of some angel. She had been busy getting Mother Ursula to bed, putting warm dishcloths to her feet, brewing her a dish of strong China Drink from those mysterious little leaves concealed in a box hidden in the rafters, and she had partaken of the China Drink herself, too. She hoped it was not an un-Christian act, but it had been very comforting. Then there had been all the clothes to wash, for they were

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covered with mud and duckweed, and her own hair to rinse. Lastly, she had bathed in the sea, and the waves had washed away the bitter thoughts of revenge which were surging up within her, and she felt more calm. Cleansed from the mud of the pond and the indignity of the ordeal, she had seated herself upon the doorstep to rest, and she must have dozed a little.

Now she was wide awake, and for the first time since the morning she could think coherently. She wondered why the shots had been fired down by the sand martins' cliff. Had they taken the masked stranger? Her lips trembled a little at the thought. Such a tall young man with beautiful smooth hands and a pleasant voice—it seemed hard to think of him kneeling before the block. How could she find out what had happened to him? Alas! there was no way save by trudging into Winchelsea, and as she could not leave Mother Ursula, that was out of the question. In the morning she would go to the cave; if she ran all the way she could get there and back well within the hour, and surely nothing could befall Mother Ursula during that short space of time. She smiled contentedly as she thought of Mother Ursula. Her mistress

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had changed toward her; there was a softness in her voice, a kindness in her eye, that had never been there before.

"You are a good girl, Temperance Farncombe, and worthy of your name," Mother Ursula had whispered as she lay comfortably in her bed, and such praise had sent a wave of new energy surging through the girl and caused her heavy feet to trip lightly over the shingle as she went to and fro to the well for water. But her mistress had not disclosed the identity of the masked stranger, and Temperance knew better than to ask again. Perhaps he was Sir Godfrey Vane himself—the spy, the King's friend. Then Andrada's conduct had been strange. Why had he brought up the question of the young man's name? Surely to disturb Colonel Coppelstone. Yes, Andrada could laugh, and sing his rollicking songs, and shout to them all to come and see the witch ducked, but he was a friend in spite of it. There was a purpose beneath his behavior. He was an agitator, a little spark making its way unseen, and leaving a mighty blaze behind it.

As she looked across the marsh so still and lovely in the clear light from which the sun had

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vanished, Temperance discerned two figures in the distance, and she strained her eyes the better to observe them. Yes, they were Andrada and the bear. Andrada and the bear! The only two creatures who had come to see how they fared after that ordeal by water. But there—Annis dared not come, and it was too far for Dame Pepper to walk. It was of Annis that Temperance thought as she watched the two figures drawing nearer—Annis standing like a maiden bewitched; Annis in her cotton gown the color of a violet which has bloomed in the shade, and her blue eyes round and scared. Had Andrada drawn Annis into some plot, some adventure, that she had been with him in the woods? It was unlike Annis to associate with a great rough sailor man, ragged, and not over-clean, and she had a horror of large animals.

“Her eyes the glowworm lend thee,
The shooting stars befriend thee,
And elves also
Whose little eyes glow
Like sparks of fire, befriend thee.”

Andrada's voice came ringing out rich and true, and it brought Temperance to her feet and

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sent her flying through the herb garden like an arrow from a bow.

"Hush-sh!" she said, with her fingers to her lips. "Mother Ursula sleeps. Singing like that with never a thought for anyone! Enough to wake the Seven Sleepers themselves!"

"Ho, ho!" he laughed. "Even this morning's little frolic has not damped your spirits for long, witch maiden. Bravo! How is the old dame?"

"Very weary, and full of pains. Still, it is warm weather and I have a good cure for the rheumatism. 'Tis wonderful that there are no bones broken, and I am so glad to have her back that 'tis almost a pleasure to nurse her."

"You look very wan yourself."

"'Twill pass; 'tis the shock. I thank you, Andrada, for coming to my assistance on the bank. Oh, dearie me! I am not fit to receive company."

While speaking she had been plaiting her hair and winding it tightly round her head; Andrada watched her with a little gleam of curiosity in his eyes.

"I have heard strange stories concerning you," he said.

"That does not surprise me!"

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"They tell me that you are the daughter of Colonel Farncombe who fell at Worcester. Is it true?"

"Yes," she nodded simply.

"I wondered where you got your pride and spirit from! If the Prince returns, most likely your property will be restored to you."

She lifted her shoulders disdainfully.

"Even the King cannot give me back my house, my pictures, my bees; all that was dear to me has gone. Still, I have retained the best of my inheritance. My name they never could take, and that is sufficient for me."

"Many have fared worse even than you."

"Meaning yourself, stranger?"

"Nay; I am in no way to be pitied. I am a servant of the Prince. I go about the country with my eyes open, and send many messages across the water. One has gone today."

Temperance's heart gave a great bound and she caught at the top of the fence.

"Has he escaped?" she breathed.

"While the ducking was going on," he nodded. "In broad daylight there came a little boat from France, and he has gone. What has befallen him on the water I know not. There was a fight in

the Channel this afternoon, and the soldiers fired from the shore by the cliffs, but whether it was at the little boat or to relieve their feelings I cannot guess."

"Oh, I pray that he may reach his destination in safety!"

"Temperance!"

It was Mother Ursula calling, and out came Richard, flapping and croaking in a great state of annoyance because Temperance was not at hand immediately. Back darted the girl, and her face was glad as she bent tenderly over the rough wooden bed upon which all the dry garments they possessed were heapd.

"Who be that talking?" asked Mother Ursula.

"Andrada—the man with the bear. He has come to see how you are, and to tell us that the masked stranger escaped this afternoon in a little boat which came from France."

"That's the best news I have had for many a long day. Tell Andrada to come in; I would say a word to him."

The man was already pushing his dark face round the door, showing his strong teeth to the full, and he swept off his battered hat with the grace of a cavalier.

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"Right glad am I to speak to you once more, Mother Ursula," he said. "Much water has passed under the bridge since that day so short a time ago when I met you in Rye and asked you the state of opinions in this deserted spot. You have had a merciful escape."

"My time has not come yet, Andrada. I have this baggage to settle before I go from here," and she smiled at Temperance. "'Tis Temperance Farncombe, you know."

"Yes. Sweet Mistress Annis Twisden told me all about her."

"Jeremy Twisden be biting his thumbs, methinks! A good fat bribe passed under his nose, and moreover, the miscreant escaped. How was it that the young man went to Jeremy Twisden for shelter? It was a grievous mistake. I warned him, but too late."

"We are all prone to make mistakes; specially when we are young and burning with the desire to do a noble deed."

"Come in and tell me the young man's position. But first tie that bear up outside, for he fills me with dread, and I am too weak to have my mind pulling in two directions at a time."

Andrada attached the beast's chain to a post

at the doorstep, then seated himself at the bench near the table and tried to make friends with Richard. Temperance sat herself down on the edge of the hearth, and having learned by experience that it was no good trying to hurry matters, she remained silent and regarded the man's thick gold earrings and wild black hair. Of a truth he was very handsome, and there was the dash and swagger of the buccaneer about him.

"I saw the young man's danger when he came to consult me," said Mother Ursula. "Aye, and I guessed his name, too. What was his mission?"

"There was a large sum of money collected privately for Prince Charles, who is as near destitution as it is possible to be, and unable to pay his debts," replied Andrada. "The young man offered to take this money across the water. It was a dangerous task, and the gold was concealed about his person in leather bags, also a letter to the Prince from a general whose name I will not mention. He wrote asking His Majesty if he would be ready to return under certain conditions. The young man had hardly left London when suspicions were cast upon him and there was a hue and cry raised. His mission was discovered, the general escape to Scotland, and

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the young man was hunted from post to post till, sore pressed, he finally came to anchorage here. He knew that Master Twisden was a man likely to be tempted with money, and as he was in desperate circumstances and likely to be discovered at any moment, he took the bull by the horns and went to Jeremy Twisden by night."

"Did you know of his presence in the neighborhood, Andrada?" asked Mother Ursula.

"No, but I knew of his mission, and I was seeking him. I had never seen him till the day I came upon your serving-maid and Mistress Annis on the cliffs. He told me that after promising assistance Master Twisden was suddenly afraid and gave him up to Colonel Copplestone *without betraying his name*, which he pretended he did not know."

"A nice plight all the way round," nodded Mother Ursula. "Well, it has saved me from the gallows. When the Colonel came to me in prison I told him the fugitive's name, and he made inquiries. He must have found it to be correct, for he consented to giving me trial by water on condition I kept my mouth shut."

"It might have killed you, mistress!" burst out Temperance.

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"I was obliged to risk something, my girl, and I was willing to take my chance. I knew I could trust Temperance Farncombe to fish me out if only I had the strength of will to make no struggle and sink without fuss."

"Suppose I had not been there?" faltered Temperance.

"I supposed no such thing, for I saw you there—last week in the black bowl. Sometimes the future is revealed to me; why I know not. 'Tis as if coming events cast their shadows into the black bowl."

Then Andrada leaned forward eagerly, and spoke soft and low.

"Have you seen my future, Ursula Harbottle?" he asked.

But the witch turned away wearily, and shook her head.

"I have seen nothing for you," she sighed. "But I warn you as I warned the masked stranger—beware of a man with a hole in his forehead. Now go, for I am tired."

Andrada laughed into his beard; a low, bemused laugh, and without a word to Temperance he got up and went out. The girl followed

him, and as he unhooked the bear's chain he asked her a question.

"Mistress Temperance," he said, "if reason pointed one way and affection another, which would you follow?"

"Affection," answered Temperance.

"We see alike," he nodded. "Good day. Hi—oop—Andrada! Salute the lovely lady!"

The bear stood up on his hind legs, and saluted Temperance with a great dusty paw, which pleased her so much that she ran and fetched the remains of the honey which Annis had given her.

"You seem very fond of him," she remarked, watching the bear sitting back on his haunches and eating honey from the combe more daintily than many a Christian. He used his paws like hands, his great claws curled round the comb, and he was fastidious in his manner of feeding.

"He is my friend," replied Andrada. "I rescued him long ago from a bear-baiting in Oxford. The dogs were at him. Very fierce and terrible was the fight, and so weary was he that when I saw that he could last no longer I made a bid for him. The crowd was pleased with the

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way he had defended himself, and granted him his life. So I patched him up, and here he is as good as new—a trusted friend.”

“It seems to me most unnatural for a great savage beast like that to dance in the streets for a living,” murmured Temperance. “Good-by. You have nothing more to tell me, Andrada?”

The man shifted from one foot to the other, twirled the gold ring in his ear, and kicked with the heel of his broken boot upon the edge of the doorstep.

“My secrets are not my own to give away,” he said at last.

“I understand. Fare you well.”

Temperance returned thoughtfully to the kitchen; Mother Ursula was asleep, so the girl sat herself down and played with Phineas. Richard had deserted her; he sat at the head of Mother Ursula's bed and took no notice whatever of Temperance.

It was a very still evening; so still that now and again a rumble of sound like the distant echo of much shouting came floating over the marshes from the town on the hill.

“Most likely there are disturbances, owing to

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the escape of the fugitive," thought Temperance. "The King's name was mentioned in public today, and no doubt there will be riots in the streets. Andrada has lighted a fire here which Colonel Copplesstone and Master Twisden will have some difficulty in extinguishing. Strange that they do not suspect him. And here I sit waiting—always waiting—and for what?"

So lonely was she that she went to the door, and looked anxiously across the marshes in the direction of Jeremy Twisden's farm. Then her heart began to beat rapidly, for a figure which she knew well was coming swiftly through the dusk, and she went down to the fence of salt-eaten stakes to await it.

"Annis," she called softly.

"Yes—'tis me," came the panting reply. "There be riots in the town, Temperance! Very grave and serious, and the people in a ferment, owing to the escape of the young man. There were some cheers for—Prince Charles. My father has gone out to quell the row, and Colonel Copplesstone has sent for more troops. That is why I dared come—my father will not be home tonight. Are you well, Temperance? Un-

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hurt? Oh, I shall never forget it! Coming like that from the still and beautiful woods to such horror."

Their hands met over the top of the fence, and Temperance assured her friend that all was well, then waited for her to speak. Annis appeared to find it difficult to frame her words, and suddenly they left her lips with a rush.

"Temperance, I am betrothed to Andrada."

"Are you stark and staring mad? Bewitched?"

"Perhaps—I know not! But I am very happy."

"A filibustering clown whom you know not from Adam!"

"Indeed, I would know him anywhere from Adam! Temperance, be kind to me. There is something beneath the swagger which does greatly attract me, and I trust him. Say what you will, but my fate is thrown in with his from henceforth. I felt it from the first, and so did he."

"You will take the road and go tramping with the bear?"

"It sounds dreadful to hear you put it so straight, but if needs be I will—to begin with. Maybe I shall bring him to long for a little cot-

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tage, and a garden, and bees, and a good broad-cloth coat to wear on Sundays."

"Your father will never allow you to marry so beneath you in station."

"Alas! I dare not think of that. My father would rather see me in the pillory than married to Andrada—a Royalist, too."

"Annis, it be rank folly. You surely do not contemplate a runaway match?"

"No. There is nothing settled with regard to our marriage. We will wait to see the turn of events. Temperance, sweet Temperance, kiss me and wish me good luck. I could be so happy, but there is so much against me. 'Tis such a strange betrothal—no feast, no blessing, no ring. Only you and the trees in the woods know, but Andrada says that all will come right with faith and trust."

In spite of her anxiety, Temperance kissed her friend fervently, and away went Annis into the darkness of the night like some glad moth on the wing. Temperance returned to the cottage, bolted the door, and before retiring to her own room she bent over Mother Ursula and asked her if she required anything.

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"Nothing," she replied. "Go to bed, my girl, and sleep well. You must be very weary."

"I am. And, mistress—'tis a secret—but Annis Twisden be betrothed to Andrada."

"I am not surprised; I guessed something was in the air. There will be trouble, Temperance, and it is all most surpassing strange."

CHAPTER XII

The Love Token and the Pledge Which Was Postponed



IN SPITE OF HER COUR-
age, Mother Ursula was obliged
to stay in bed for three days, and during that
time Temperance did not leave her. No human
soul visited the cottage on the marsh, no news
came to its inhabitants, and only the rumble of
cannon in the Channel and the sound of shots
coming from the little town on the hill warned
them of trouble.

On the morning of the fourth day, however,

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Mother Ursula hobbled out into the sunshine, with Richard flapping beside her, and stated her intention of making a certain pomade warranted to drive away wrinkles from the face.

"We shall require it before long," she said.

"Who will use it?" laughed Temperance. "I see neither Dame Pepper nor the apothecary's daughter paying away good money for the sake of a wrinkle or so less. The cultivation of beauty, mistress, is for the rich; we work too hard to attend to our faces!"

"Speak for yourself, Temperance Farncombe. I have my future to attend to, and that future lies in pomades and paints. I have had enough of the witch pond. Twice have I been tried by water, and there shall be no third time. When the King returns, away will go our sable gowns, our dull attire, our drab sad faces, and we shall dance, and deck ourselves like birds of paradise. There will be no limit to our extravagances even as there has been no limit to our economies. 'Tis natural, Temperance, and we must be ready to meet it. Keep a body in a dungeon too long, and he will go mad when he sees the sun."

"Do you truly think the King will return?"

"Aye, I do. No army has ever yet ruled a land

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with success. Go and fetch me my requirements. I will try and make the famous Egyptian preparation which my master, the magician of Shrewsbury, whispered to me before he went to the gallows."

With dancing feet, and a song on her lips, Temperance gathered together the necessary ingredients; there was the precious incense, the wax, the cypress berries, the oil, the milk, and all these she arranged on a little table in the shade, with other utensils required to make the famous pomade.

"Will you have the black bowl?" she asked.

"No; I have no wish to see the future today."

"I do so often think of the lady I beheld there—and Annis running up the hill."

"Annis Twisden is utterly unaware of her destiny; little does she guess what is before her. There, my girl, now you are free to go where you will, but keep your eyes open. I put no conditions upon you today, but if there are riots in the town keep out of them, and do not give your opinion even if asked for it."

Full of joy at the thought of this unexpected freedom, burning with desire to hear the latest news and perhaps see Annis and Andrada, Tem-

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perance attired herself as for a feast day. Her festive garments consisted only of the much-mended white linen bonnet and Dame Goody Pepper's gray petticoat, but as she turned her old black skirt up over the petticoat and pinned it behind, Temperance felt most becomingly and attractively gowned. Her exuberance, and the great hope which was in her heart, gave to her drab garments an air of festivity; and all said and done, it is the spirit which counts and not the clothes in which it is draped. She placed her slender brown hands upon her jimp little waist, turned her long and elegant neck as she looked at her reflection in the brass milk-can which was used for storing water, and nodded at herself.

"So the name of Temperance does not suit me," she smiled. "Witch maiden. Well, one can be called many worse things than that."

Graceful as a reed she tripped across the marshes, gathering flowers where the shrimps and crabs once disported themselves, leaping over the ditches, and at Jeremy Twisden's farm she halted. Should she risk his whip and his dogs and go in boldly and ask for Annis? No, not today when she was wearing her linen hood and felt strong in the knowledge that she was a

free, true subject of a gracious king. She did not want to be reminded that she was an outcast—or rather that she was treated as an outcast.

As she mounted the hill she reflected upon Annis's destiny. What could it be? The life of a gypsy tramping the country in company of Andrada and the bear, sleeping beneath the stars, begging for bread. Oh, such a life was not possible for dainty little Annis—the milkmaid—the little sheltered violet.

"Dearie me!" she sighed as her eyes wandered out to sea, "and what is my destiny? No learning save that of witchcraft, and mighty little of that, for Mother Ursula keeps her secrets to herself. Well, I must make paints and pomades for the skin. When the King returns we will tramp to London, and with the gold pieces hidden in the rafters buy ourselves new dresses. Some redress is due to me, and I will go to the King myself and beg for just sufficient money to set us up, and I will ask him to allow us to hawk our wares among the court ladies. Now I wonder whether a vender of paints and pomades is considered more respectable than a witch's serving-maid? Dearie me! but suppose the King should never return?"

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Fluttering pleasantly between hopes and fears, she made her way toward "The Four Alls," where a group of soldiers were standing drinking ale in the sunshine. She noticed that there was no gossiping on the doorsteps, no little knots of people discussing the harvest in the shade of the trees by Saint Thomas's Church; folk were behind their shop windows, or safely shut up in their houses; those out of doors walked quickly, looking neither to the right nor to the left, and having no parley with their neighbours.

"There is nothing very savory in the wind," thought Temperance. "Nevertheless, all is quiet. No doubt a few broken heads have calmed the fire of loyalty! Fire indeed! 'Tis a very frost-bitten flame that skulks here!"

Braving the bold glances of the soldiers, she went into the alehouse, and bent the knee to Dame Pepper, who was sewing a pin-cushion, and panting like a bellows in the exertion that such labor required.

"Lord-a-mercy-me!" exclaimed the good dame. "Is it Ascension Day, or Spring sowings that you be all decked out in your best, Temperance Farncombe?"

"My best, Mistress Pepper? I have no best save a clean hood!"

"And after the ducking, too. To come up here as proud as a Spanish galleon! Of a truth, Temperance, the wind be not long out of your sails. Who gave you that petticoat? Me? I had no idea it was so good, otherwise I should have kept it for myself."

"I came to thank you for the brandy, Mistress Pepper. 'Twas very good of you to bring it to me. In such a beautiful silver bowl, too."

"Yes, yes. I have some fine silver and pewter," murmured the good dame, looking hastily away from the girl's glowing face. "And it is as well to keep an eye on it, with so many strangers about."

Temperance tripped over the sanded floor to the bench where Dame Pepper sat, and bending down on the pretext of admiring the pin-cushion she whispered:

"Have they taken the Duke of York?"

"You mean Sir Godfrey Vane. No. He slipped away to sea in a French boat. Keep your mouth shut; your views are well known and we've had enough burning and shooting and mutiny the last three days. 'Tis only this morn-

ing that I unbolted my doors, such scenes there have been in the streets. 'Tis a new Oliver Cromwell we want to take the country in hand."

Temperance said nothing, but with a quick movement she took the pin-cushion from Mistress Pepper and repeated the well known inscription worked upon it in fine silken cross-stitch of brilliant hue.

"'God bless P. C. and down with the Rump,' " she said. "P. C.—that be Prince Charles! And it was the wicked Rump Parliament that brought His Sacred Majesty of Blessed Memory to be executed at Whitehall. And you be covering that dear inscription with a piece of black sarcenet! For shame! Maybe your own mother worked it."

She ripped the black sarcenet from the pin-cushion, and with the gay-colored object in her hand she went spinning round the room, while Dame Pepper crimsoned with rage, and so great was her indignation that words choked in her throat. But Temperance was in a wild mood, and hearing a familiar voice outside she sprang on to the counter from which ale was served, and reaching up she placed the pin-cushion on a shelf where the French and Spanish wines

were stored, and from where the inscription could be read by all good eyes. Then jumping down with a great flourish of skirts, she threw a kiss to Dame Pepper and went dancing out into the sunshine.

"Witch-touched—overlooked," muttered Dame Pepper. "Lordy! What are the girls coming to these days? She will end bad, the pert slut."

Evidently Andrada's feelings were very much akin to those of Temperance that day, for when he saw her coming out of the alehouse like some belled flower propelled by the wind, he started singing, and the bear danced, and the soldiers gathered round. Hearing the sweet, clear voice of Temperance lifted in duet with the rollicking tones of the sailor man, Dame Pepper came ambling to her door, and many were the heads which came popping out of windows. The apothecary's daughter whispered to her cook maid that it was all most scandalous; singing and dancing in the streets like that was a sin in the sight of the Church—and what a song!

"Hey nonny, no!

Men are fools that wish to die!

Is't not fine to dance and sing

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When the bells of death do ring?
Is't not fine to swim in wine
And turn upon the toe,
And sing hey nonny, no!
When the winds blow and the seas flow?"

"Hey, nonny, no!" joined in the soldiers.

The noise was so great that people came out into the street, and lifted their shoulders when they beheld the witch's maiden and the ragged soldier singing while the bear danced, and not a few who remembered Colonel Farncombe turned up their eyes to the sky in holy horror to see his daughter behaving thus. Strange to relate that when they beheld Temperance going about the menial duties which fell to her lot they seldom remembered that she was the daughter of a great soldier and a noble lady, but when her young spirit craved for a little companionship, a little good cheer which she was ready to share with any congenial soul who would give her a word of sympathy, they were shocked, and thanked God that the Colonel was not there to see his daughter's disgrace.

"Shame!" cried a voice.

"Come ladies, my lords, and gentlemen," cried Andrada, "let us be merry now that the

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trouble is over. Why black faces on a sunny day? Time enough for them in the winter. Why, the very bear dances for joy! We have all had enough of quarreling. Each man has a right to his opinion. Who'll deny me that?"

"Aye, aye," nodded the old hedger and ditcher.

"To be sure," said the miller. "Give us another song, bear leader."

Many folk gathered round in a circle, and who should come tripping along with a basket on her arm, and a posy of red roses in her hand, but Annis Twisden. White capped and aproned, white kerchief folded neatly over her gray cashmere gown, the only color she wore was in her cheeks, which were as blooming as the roses, and in her eyes as blue as the heavens. Smiling she stood in the crowd, and looking straight at her Andrada sang one of old Ben Jonson's songs.

"Drink to me only with thine eyes,
And I will pledge with mine;
Or leave a kiss but in the cup,
And I'll not look for wine.
The thirst that from the soul doth rise,
Doth ask a drink divine:
But might I of Jove's nectar sup,
I would not change for thine."

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When he finished there was some applause and some disparaging remarks, but he treated all alike with good-humored banter, and taking off his hat he shook it and remarked that he was mighty thirsty.

"Come," he pleaded, "a coin or two for a draught of ale to wet my whistle."

He collected a few pence, and Dame Goody Pepper offered him a tankard of ale, which he accepted with many bows and extravagant thanks. Holding the tankard at arm's-length, he flung up his head, and shouted:

"A pledge! Who'll pledge me in a drink of ale?"

"It depends on the pledge, friend," cried a soldier.

"Such a one that you have not heard for many a long day. Toast worth pledging! Who'll drink with me?"

There was much excitement; this man worked upon the crowd with unseen magic, and so eager were the people to hear what his pledge was to be that tankards were filled and passed round. Mistress Pepper looked apprehensive, Temperance was as taut as the cord of an anchor, so

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intense was her anxiety, and Annis Twisden bit her lips.

"Ready? Then I give you the pledge!" cried Andrada.

But it was not given. Through the crowd came thundering Jeremy Twisden, white to the mouth with fury, his face twisted with rage. Facing Andrada, he looked at him for an instant, then with uplifted fist he struck the tankard from his hand, sending the foaming liquid through the air like drops of amber.

"Father!" gasped Annis, and up to her heart went her fluttering hand.

"Thief! Spy!" stormed Jeremy Twisden. "I'll have you hanged and quartered! Take that!"

He was about to strike him on the head with the butt of his large pistol, but Andrada ducked nimbly aside, and the bear reared himself up threateningly.

"And why should I take it?" cried Andrada, while the crowd pressed eagerly forward to watch and listen.

"In return for this!" shouted Jeremy Twisden, and something hard and bright hurtled through the air and struck the sailor on the forehead.

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"Mercy me!" whispered Annis, and her eyes opened wide with terror.

"A love token!" cried the apothecary's daughter.

Andrada picked the little bright object from the ground, placed it on the palm of his hand, and held it out to the crowd. It was a piece of copper with strange signs engraved upon it, very much like a coin, and it hung from a strand of torn green silk which was threaded through a little hole in the top.

"Copper, the symbol of Venus," raved Jeremy Twisden, "and green, her color. The rascal-lion gave it to my daughter. Aye, you tremble, Annis, but if you lie to me I'll whip you to within an inch of your life. I found the token in the dairy; it must have slipped from your neck where my dairymaid saw it hanging but yesterday. My daughter to accept a love token from a beggar. The girl is bewitched, and I'll have Mother Ursula to account for this! Seize the varlet. I'll put him in the stocks!"

Andrada lifted his hand, demanding silence, and with the copper disk swinging from between his lean fingers he stepped up to Jeremy Twisden.

"I ask the hand of your daughter in marriage, sir," he said. "I will work for her and give her the home she is fitted to adorn. We have plighted our troth. Is it not so Annis? We are betrothed, and we ask your blessing."

There was a rumble of amazement from the crowd, and Jeremy Twisden lost control of himself. He pointed his weapon at Andrada, but again the bear leader was too quick for him. From beneath his tattered coat the soldier whipped out a pistol, struck that of Jeremy Twisden from his hand, and gave an incomprehensible order to the bear. Annis screamed, her father took her by the shoulders, and hastening to get out of the bear's way he floundered toward the alehouse, shouting to Dame Pepper to lock his daughter up.

Some laughed, there was much noise, but nobody carried out Jeremy Twisden's orders and seized Andrada. After all, it was nobody's special business. Indeed, when they saw Andrada using both arms, and the huge army pistol gleaming, and the dusty bear showing his teeth and growling, they had no wish to interfere. If Jeremy Twisden's daughter was bewitched, he must manage the affair himself; they had had

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enough of witches and shooting during the last few days.

Then there came a sound of a horse galloping up the hill; the clatter of those hoofs ringing upon the hard ground struck terror to Temperance's heart, for she felt a great danger approaching. What it was she knew not, but 'twas as if something unseen strove to communicate with her. She shut her eyes, and waited quite still as she had seen Mother Ursula wait. Nearer and nearer came the horse, and suddenly Temperance seized hold of Andrada's arm as he grasped the bear's chain to pull him away from Jeremy Twisden, and she whispered in his ear.

"Flee!" she said. "Flee for your life!"

Without undue haste or apparent concern Andrada backed out of the crowd, dragging the bear along with him, but with his pistol pointed at Jeremy Twisden.

"You will hear of me again, Master Farmer," he said. "Beware of the bear! Friends, our pledge is postponed for the moment!"

There was much comment on all sides, and a burst of laughter when suddenly Andrada and the bear took to their heels and made toward

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the woods on the cliffs, but as Jeremy Twisden, pistol in hand, started to pursue him, Colonel Coplestone came galloping up and asked what the noise was about. There were many ready to enlighten him, and upon hearing Andrada's name he spurred his horse on toward the woods.

"Seize him! There is a price upon his head!" he shouted. "Fire, Twisden! I have had news that maybe your bear leader is Sir Godfrey Vane, the arch spy!"

Those people who but a moment ago would not have harmed a hair of Andrada's head now ran after him, some shouting vengeance—soldiers, townfolk, witch's maiden—all save Annis Twisden, who was weeping her heart out on the sanded floor of Dame Pepper's alehouse.

CHAPTER XIII

The Mysterious Passing of Andrada



UNTIL EVENTIDE TEM-
perance followed the rabble
that hunted for Andrada and
the bear. Under the command of Colonel Cop-
plestone the soldiers made a systematic search,
but the crowd acted very much after the manner
of chickens, running hither and thither, uttering
the name of Sir Godfrey Vane in incredulous
tones. It would seem that chickens know not
their own minds, and if this is so, then it was cer-
tainly the same with the crowd. At one moment

the people were hot in their anger against Andrada, at another they praised him for a very fine man after their own hearts, and hoped that if he were Sir Godfrey Vane he would escape, for of a truth he was a gentleman and a fine sportsman. They discussed the pledge which he had postponed, and there were many who dared to say aloud that it would have been "His Majesty the King."

"And maybe I would have drunk it," said the weaver.

"There's something mighty fine in the words," murmured the miller.

"They ring proud," sighed the apothecary's daughter.

"Shame! Treason! A dirty spy!" shouted another, and the crowd veered round and abused Andrada for deceiving the whole town.

Temperance uttered not a word, and as nobody addressed her it was not of much consequence. Looks of scorn and fear were thrown at her now and again, but on she trudged through wood and undergrowth, down to the shore, up to the town again, and never a trace of Andrada or the bear did they discover.

Upon returning to the town, Temperance

found that a great notice had been posted up on the church wall offering a large reward for the capture of a spy named Andrada, but believed to be Sir Godfrey Vane, the friend of Charles Stuart. As she stood with many others before the placard which she could not read, Temperance prayed silently that he might escape; who-soever he might be, beggar, sailor, or nobleman, she prayed that he and his bear might go free for Annis Twisden's sake. She did not believe him to be Sir Godfrey Vane any more than she believed the masked stranger to be the Duke of York, for it was incredible to think that so great a man would wish to wed a yeoman's daughter, but that he was the King's friend in spirit she knew to be the truth. A true and brave man, but would he have dared to give that pledge had Jeremy Twisden not arrived at so inopportune a moment? Yes, he had the courage for anything!

"He is well practiced in the art of getting out of tight corners," she thought, hopefully. "He is older than the masked stranger and has had more experience."

She did not fear for him half so much as she did for the young fugitive who had come to the

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cottage by night, and as she turned away from the notice with the intention of going home she espied Jeremy Twisden striding toward "The Four Alls." Hiding behind a tree in the churchyard, she waited for him, and when he came out again with Annis she followed them at a safe distance.

Jeremy Twisden walked quickly, and Annis ran a few paces behind him, mopping her eyes now and again with her apron; her head was bent and there was no joy in her footsteps. For a maiden of so tender a character the ordeal of walking through the town in such a plight was very terrible.

"Poor girl! bewitched—betrothed to a beggar," whispered the people.

"If he be Sir Godfrey Vane, how he must be laughing!" cried the apothecary's daughter from her doorstep. "Annis always dressed above her station, but she has aimed a little too high this time. My Lady Vane, indeed!"

The heart of Temperance ached for her friend, and turning upon the apothecary's daughter she said, derisively:

"Aimed high, has she? Ho-ho! So Sir Godfrey Vane is too high for a Republican of Win-

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chelsea? You belittle your own cause, mistress, for surely so sweet a flower as Annis would grace the King's court!"

As she flounced past the apothecary's daughter with anger blazing in her eyes Colonel Coplestone rode up, and to her consternation he ordered Temperance to walk along beside him, which she did, but fearing greatly.

Not a word did he speak till they were going down the hill, and Temperance was obliged to run in the dust kicked up by his horse to keep pace with him. At the bottom of the hill she perceived Annis and her father, but there was nobody else in sight.

"Where have you concealed the man known as Andrada?" questioned the Colonel.

"I have not concealed him, Your Honor. I know nothing of him."

"You knew him to be Sir Godfrey Vane. Do not lie to me, girl."

"No, sir. I did not know that he was even suspected of being Sir Godfrey till this afternoon."

"What do you know of Sir Godfrey Vane?"

"That he is the King's friend."

"Nothing else?"

Temperance was silent.

"Answer me," and the Colonel lifted his whip ominously.

"I know that some years back Master Jeremy Twisden was one of a party of Cromwell's soldiers hunting for Sir Godfrey, and that Master Twisden accepted a bribe from the said nobleman to keep his mouth shut concerning his whereabouts. That is all I know of the gentleman."

So overwhelmed with astonishment was the Colonel that he stopped his horse, and gazed dumfounded at Temperance for some time before he could speak.

"Can you prove that?" he asked, suddenly.

"Nay, sir. Who will take the word of a *witch's serving-maid*?"

"Give me the name of the young man supposed to be the Duke of York."

"Before God, sir, I do not know it. He never told me his name."

"Has he communicated with you?"

"No, Your Honor."

"You know not whether he is safe?"

"No, Your Honor."

"Did you help him to escape?"

"I provided him with food as I would any starving fugitive. I know nothing of him."

"I am tempted to believe that you speak the truth, witch's maiden though you be."

"There is honor, sir, among witches!"

"Speak not so glibly of witches! I have my eye upon you, and warn you to have a care."

Spurring his horse, he galloped off, leaving Temperance to continue her way and think upon the strangeness of his behavior. Was he anxious concerning the safety of the young fugitive, or putting some subtle theory of his own to the test? Anxious to relate the happenings of the day to her mistress, Temperance ran through the gloaming, and halfway across the marsh met Richard, who had come to meet her. Very concerned was Richard, and in common with bad-tempered creatures he became angry when he found that his fears for his mistress' serving-maid were unfounded. Here she was safe and sound, while he and his mistress had been quaking together for nothing. He flew at Temperance's ankles, and drove her along so ungallantly that she was obliged to take a stick and threaten him.

"How I am pestered!" she cried. "By men,

troubles, and even ravens. Mercy me! Richard, a bad temper is worse than anything I know! I'll teach you, I will!"

All the way home she threatened him with the stick, and so sulky did he become that he went complaining to Mother Ursula, who started to rate Temperance soundly, and upbraid her for being so late.

"I thought you had given me a holiday," replied the girl. "The first I have had for ten years! Come, mistress, 'tis not fair play to scold me thus."

"I was concerned about you," muttered Mother Ursula.

"If 'twas affection which drove you to anger I am ready to forgive and to cook a meal! No food has passed my lips since I left you this morning. There was not one that offered me a bite in spite of my clean hood and most unoffending manner. I am famished."

"And maybe I can eat a bit of supper to-night," said Mother Ursula. "What have we got?"

"I snared two very fine rabbits last night, and stewed them. Warmed up with a leek or two, and followed by a few honey cakes, 'twill be a

meal fit for a king. Mercy me! I set no crab traps in the rocks today."

She ate a very hearty supper, and as her appetite became appeased she related the happenings of the day to Mother Ursula, and the old woman nodded solemnly.

"I told you there would be trouble with Annis," she said. "'Tis not surprising that Jeremy Twisden objects to a bear leader for a son-in-law."

"But if he is Sir Godfrey Vane?"

"Worse still. A Royalist, and a Prince's friend. Poor Annis! she be between the devil and the deep sea."

"Did I do right to mention the bribe?"

"I would have done it myself."

"Will you tell me the name of the masked fugitive now?"

"That I will not. I swore to Colonel Copplestone to keep it secret, and had you known you would have got us both into trouble today. Had the young man wished you to know, would he not have told you himself?"

"That is altogether another affair."

"It seems to me the same. There is nothing like a little mystery for keeping the memory

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green, and maybe the young man thought you would forget him did he tell you all."

"If his charms hang on so slender a thread, they do not interest me!" cried Temperance. "'Tis mere curiosity on my part, and I care not who he is. Mercy me! I wonder what Annis is doing? Shall we have a little coffee, and will you set a charm upon it that I may drink it, too?"

"'Tis not poison, Temperance; nevertheless, I will say some words to keep it from harming you in case it carries some evil from those far lands where it grows. Use it sparingly. Where shall I get more berries when those are gone?"

After their meal they went to bed, but first Richard made his peace with Temperance. Disconsolately, and with the air of a martyr, he hopped after her while she washed the dishes, and at last she spoke pretty to him and gave him the leg of a rabbit; in a state of great delight he hurried to his rafters to rest, and took his peace-offering with him.

As she lay upon her mattress of heather and fern Temperance half expected to hear the voice of Andrada outside, but very quickly she fell asleep, and did not waken till Mother Ursula called her in the morning.

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"Hi, Slug-a-bed! Get up!" called Mother Ursula.

Hoping to gain a little time, Temperance argued that she was not a slug-a-bed. It was pleasant to lie there with the sun slanting in upon her, and listen to the new note in Mother Ursula's voice. She took full advantage of it, and gave herself ten minutes grace before rising. By that time Mother Ursula's patience was exhausted and Temperance was obliged to hurry to make up for her dilatoriness.

As she ran to draw water from the well she looked about the shore eagerly, still expecting to see Andrada, and she sang at the top of her voice in case he should be within hearing; because Mother Ursula had called her a slug-a-bed she sang the song of Myrtilla, the sweet slug-a-bed.

"Myrtilla, early on the lawn,
Steals roses from the blushing dawn,
But when Myrtilla sleeps till ten,
Aurora steals 'em back again!"

There was no reply to her song, and when she had prepared the food and swept the cottage, Mother Ursula told her she had better take her

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basket and net and go shrimping near the sand martins' cliff.

"I'll take Richard, too," she nodded. "Maybe there will be others thereabouts beside myself."

Her supposition proved correct, for the soldiers were there, and although she kept down on the shore, some distance from the cliff, and could not hear what they said, she knew by the tone of their voices, and the manner in which they hastened about, that they had discovered something. So great was her anxiety that she ventured nearer; walking boldly over the grass, and she soon knew the cause of all the excitement. The soldiers had discovered the secret cave. With Richard perched upon her shoulder she stood and watched them, listening to their conversation, and at last she joined in.

"Like as not that was where the Duke of York hid," she called.

"What do you know of the Duke of York?" asked the sergeant, suspiciously.

"Nothing," she replied, "but I have two ears in my head, and there is nothing amiss with them."

"Leave her be; she is a witch," said one of the soldiers.

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"If all witches were as handsome I would forgive them," laughed the sergeant. "If you are a witch, tell me to whom this belongs," and he came toward her with a black gauntlet in his hand.

When she beheld that black glove with the elegant white embroidery stained with sea water, Temperance's heart fluttered a little beneath her old, discolored bodice. She took it in her hand, traced with her finger the roses worked along the top of the gauntlet, and examined the tiny pearls sewn into the heart of each rose. A very beautiful glove. Its owner would be fastidious; he would have no use for common, ragged draggle-tails and reputed witches. The glove placed the masked stranger in regions so far removed from her that she dropped it from between her fingers and thumb, and confessed that, although she did not know its owner's name, she could guess his appearance.

"Some perfumed, mincing cavalier with a silken vest, and rosettes of pink satin at his knees," she laughed.

"A slender but long hand," smiled the sergeant, sticking his great fist into the glove. "Such a hand as one would expect Sir Godfrey Vane

to have. Anyway, it proves that our quarry has been here, therefore is likely to come again. The cliffs are riddled with holes and caves."

"Aye, smugglers used them years back before the sea deserted them. Good day."

She walked away, and there were tears in her eyes. Why was she going barefooted and ragged while others wore elegant gauntlets embroidered with pearls? She had as much right to pearls as they. Oh, but she had nothing—nothing but her name! Annis had her love token and her pintado gowns, the apothecary's daughter her dark, smelly little shop, Mother Ursula her familiars and the gold pieces in the rafters, Andrada his bear, the masked stranger his gloves, but she—nothing. Well, she would walk all the prouder because of it; pearls and elegant gloves were of no use to her. She thought of the King—poor fugitive unable to pay his debts; young, handsome, driven from country to country, a menace to the peace wherever he went because he was exiled from his own land and therefore a danger to friend and enemy. Guilty of no wrong, he was persecuted because his country had executed his beloved father, and there was no way of righting that wrong. And here they were

floundering in a sea of trouble like a ship without a captain, and nobody capable of taking the helm. Sheer common sense cried out for the King, and what prevented him from returning? But he would force himself upon his country no more; he had tried to win it back in a fair fight and lost, therefore he waited now for the crown to be offered him. And who was in authority to offer him his own crown? Parliament and the army—they had it, and as neither could wear it, Temperance wondered how long it would be before they returned it to its rightful owner.

The King's crown was still a thing of incomparable beauty to Temperance; a wreath of glowing, fiery gems, a symbol of all that is right and lovely on earth. The light returned to her eyes as she thought of it, driving away her tears, and her feet danced in anticipation of the great day when her lips would shout the joyful words which fluttered upon them. So with renewed hope and courage she ran back to Mother Ursula to talk over her plan of begging the King to allow them to sell pomades and paint at court when at last peace reigned again.

Now Andrada vanished like a burst bubble.

The only trace he left behind him was an inscription cut with a knife upon Master Jeremy Twisden's gate, which proved that he had ventured upon the marshes the very evening the soldiers were hunting for him. It was early the following morning that Jeremy Twisden beheld the words "Annis, remember me" carved upon his gate, and his fury knew no bounds. He locked his daughter up in her room, and ordered the carpenter to put a new bar in his gate as soon as possible. Temperance, on her way to catch a trout to cure the rat-catcher's little son of the whooping cough, saw the inscription, and asked the carpenter, who was taking measurements, to read it to her. All the time she was angling for the trout she thought of Annis, and so preoccupied was she that she could not give her mind to the business, and the rat-catcher's wife and her little son waited for two hours at Mother Ursula's cottage for the trout to arrive. As the boy was fasting, he cried with impatience, and when eventually Temperance returned with the trout in a bucket of water the child screamed and would not open his mouth. Mother Ursula coaxed him with honey cake, and at last he consented to have the living trout placed in his

mouth. Mother Ursula uttered strange words, the trout was replaced in the bucket of water, and back Temperance tramped to return it to the holy element from which she had taken it.

Very strange creatures were fishes; they were the symbol of life under the earth, unseen life, life pullulating in the underworld and drawing its being from most mysterious sources. Temperance was reflecting upon their efficacy for curing the whooping cough when she again passed Jeremy Twisden's gate, but the bar had gone and the carpenter was putting in the new one.

With the bar Andrada seemed to disappear completely. Weeks passed, summer sped by, Temperance sometimes caught sight of Annis walking like a pale violet from the farm to the town, but only a nod or a whispered word passed between them. Jeremy Twisden kept a sharp eye on his daughter, but Temperance knew that her friend had no news of her betrothed.

With the two strangers, Andrada and the masked fugitive, passed all the pother and ferment that for a short space had thrown the little town into such excitement, and once again

it was desolate, neglected, forgotten. The soldiers left, Colonel Coppleson took good care that no news from London circulated, and after the gathering in of the harvest, when the fields and marshes prepared themselves for winter, and the heat went out of the sun, even Temperance became dispirited and lost heart. She missed the companionship of Annis, she fretted for news, for something to happen, complained bitterly of the hardships which she knew winter must bring, and many a chiding did she get from Mother Ursula.

"The Lord be sending you these trials to prove you, Temperance Farncombe, and I be his instrument to punish you when you rebel," said Mother Ursula. "Spare the rod, spoil the child. Put on a cheerful face, for you cannot hurry the Lord in His ways, and what will be will be."

It was toward the end of October, when Temperance returned to the cottage one evening after a long afternoon collecting fuel, that she found Mother Ursula gazing into the black bowl, and knew by the expression of her face that she had seen a picture of some import.

"What is it?" cried Temperance, breathlessly.

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Ursula Harbottle passed her hand over the top of the bowl before replying, then she said:

" 'Tis the third arrival."

"The third arrival?"

"Aye. Never two without three. We have had two strangers, and the third is on the way. This visitor arrives by road, openly, with a great flourish and a high hand."

After that Temperance was tramping the roads on every possible occasion, and one morning in late November, when the frost spangled the marshes with jewels as the morris dancers spangled themselves with silver paper, Temperance set out for town to beg a few nails from the carpenter, but on the way she encountered the third arrival, and entirely forgot carpenter and nails in consequence.

CHAPTER XIV

Myrtilla the Sweet Slug-a-Bed



NOW BEYOND THE FIELDS of rye belonging to Jeremy Twisden, and running beside the pasture lands appertaining to Colonel Coppelstone was a road connecting Winchelsea with London. It was a very bad road, and one little frequented, but the only way of approach to the Colonel's fine mansion, which had been built on the lowlands at about the same time as His Majesty King Henry the Eighth built the Castle of

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Camber in which to store ammunitions. But now all arms and gunpowder had been removed from Camber Castle, and it was left to decay, therefore the only habitation within reach of the road was Coppelstone House, and as the Colonel had few visitors and small means, he did not squander his substance in repairing his road.

The highroad to London was on top of the hill, and even that had fallen into a bad state, owing to the wars and the poverty of the country. Indeed, there was very little money about; the wages of soldiers and sailors were unpaid, great generals were hard put to obtain credit for cloth and provisions, and so heavy were the taxes—especially those levied on folk known to be Royalists—that many noble families were almost destitute. Therefore it was no wonder that the roads were bad, and on that frosty morning Temperance took it into her head to walk along Colonel Coppelstone's road—it was called thus—instead of approaching the town on the hill by the usual way.

She took a delight in breaking the slender threads of ice which stretched between the great ruts, and she loved the crackle they made beneath her wooden clogs. Very proud was she of

the new clogs with the leather strap over the instep which Mother Ursula had given her; apart from her clogs she was dressed as in summer, but her gown was a little more discolored and shabby.

After a time her quick ears caught the sound of an altercation ahead, and speeding along as swiftly as her feet would carry her she came upon a most amazing scene. A coach had broken down upon the road. There it stood lopsided, with one wheel off, and two footmen were unharnessing the horses, while a third picked up a variety of garments which were spread about the road in a most incongruous manner. Hanging upon the footboy's arm Temperance beheld a cloak of orange-colored velvet trimmed with fur, rich green silken skirts, dove-gray cashmere hose, and as she blinked at him in her amazement he darted hither and thither, like a frightened weasel, snatching up linen collars, and sashes, and thrusting them pell-mell into a leather chest which lay by the ditch all burst open. From the opposite side of the coach rang an angry voice complaining furiously, and ducking under the horses' heads came an elderly serving-maid attired very becomingly in brown

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homespun and a voluminous brown cloak relieved with bands of dull-red braid. In her hand she also grasped articles of clothing, and she appeared as scared as the footboy.

"Is there no human soul in this forsaken, lamentable, odious country?" cried the angry voice. "I am cursed! I will have the man to whom this road belongs put in the stocks! I will have his ears slit. This cannot be the right way. Who would live near such a villainous, unfriendly road? We shall be murdered, and that will be a pretty ending to our travels. Is there not a country looby to direct us? Go find a wheelwright!"

The owner of the voice came angrily round from the other side of the coach, and so overwhelmed was Temperance at her appearance that she stood open-mouthed and staring like any wayside ninny.

"Ho!" cried the irate lady. "Here is a pretty specimen of what Sussex produces! *Une sottie à triple étage!* Can you speak, girl, or are you dumb?"

With an effort Temperance pulled herself together, but she found it quite disconcerting to speak to the lady whose picture she had seen

weeks back in the black bowl. In that picture she had been standing near Saint Thomas's Church, but this was the same imperious face. She was perhaps a little over twenty years old. Bunches of side curls as black as Richard's plumage disported themselves on either side of her pale countenance, her broad-brimmed hat sat rakishly upon her haughty head, her gown was of ribbed silk the color of ripe rhubarb, and over it she wore a voluminous cloak of brown silk trimmed with fur.

"Are you dumb, *gobe-mouche*?" she asked, impatiently.

Fortunately, Temperance did not understand the French language for she would not have felt flattered at being addressed as a fly-swallower, and she answered, politely:

"No, my lady."

"And will your intelligence stretch sufficiently to understand my dilemma at this moment?"

"I see that there be a wheel off the coach and your ladyship's baggage burst open. Thrown off the top, I should say."

"Oh, most clever oracle! Most astounding wisdom! Where is the nearest wheelwright?"

"In Winchelsea."

Then the lady espied the footboy heaping her belongings into the leather chest, and so angry was she that she buffeted him about the head with her muff, and called to her serving-maid to fold her yellow gown carefully and keep an eye on the half-witted clown.

"And now," she continued, turning once more to Temperance, "since your wisdom appears to be blossoming, can you tell me if Colonel Copplestone lives near here?"

"Yes, my lady. He dwells over there upon the marshes at Copplestone House," and she pointed with her rough brown finger.

"How can I get there?"

"By the road. Straight on."

"By the road! D'you call this a road? The Alps—Vesuvius—the Pyrenees all lumped together, with the mountains of Scotland thrown in, resemble a road as much as this frozen quagmire!"

"Yes, my lady."

"Don't stand there yes-my-ladying me! Run as quick as your legs will carry you to Colonel Copplestone and tell him to send me a horse. Say that his niece, Mistress Myrtila Copplestone, is stranded upon his abominable road and

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has no intention of waiting there to have her throat cut and her baggage stolen. Should he appear surprised, tell him that I could not get a ship to France, and therefore throw myself upon his hospitality till I decide upon my future abode. I have fled from London. Can you carry so long a message?"

"Yes, madam," replied Temperance, but as she had no intention whatever of approaching Colonel Copplestone and delivering such a message, she made no attempt to move.

"Are you paralyzed in the lower limbs?" demanded the lady.

"No, madam. But the Colonel is not at home. I saw him ride off awhile ago, and the servants would not believe a poor girl like me. 'Tis not far to walk. I know the way."

"Are you suggesting that I should negotiate this monstrous road under your guidance?"

"If you will, madam."

Mistress Myrtilla Copplestone sighed heavily and demanded how far it was to the Colonel's abode. Gauging the stranger's capabilities to a nicety, Temperance replied that it was just half a mile.

"Multiply that by three and we shall be nearer

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the mark," muttered the lady, and she looked disconsolately around.

There stood the horses, the lopsided coach, the footmen looking most dejected, the old serving-maid sitting forlornly upon her mistress's leather chest, and in the leaden sky there circled a cloud of ink-black crows. Not a soul on the marsh, not a human being in the wide fields. Uttering another deep sigh, giving a few brisk orders to her servants, commanding the footboy to follow her, and Temperance to lead the way, Mistress Myrtilla Copplestone hunched up her gown of rhubarb-colored silk, displaying a gray silk petticoat, and started off, still talking and bewailing her fate.

Temperance, walking a few paces ahead and rapidly recovering her usual composure, was hard put to it to prevent herself from laughing outright. Mistress Myrtilla cursed the country, the road, the government, the builders of her coach, the maker of her shoes, ships, and London in rapid succession.

"Be there much bloodshed in London?" questioned Temperance.

"I have not waited to see!" cried the lady.

"We be athirst for news down here."

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"News? General Monk has crossed the Scottish border and marched to York, where he has been joined by Fairfax. General John Lambert, who has obtained much power in London, has advanced to oppose him, after which I thought the air of France would be beneficial to my health. Until the times are more settled London is too hot for me."

Glancing back at the angle of the lady's hat and the size of her muff, to say nothing of the curls on either side of her face, Temperance asked her next question boldly.

"Is there any news of the King, my lady?"

"He is in Holland. It is whispered that General Monk is in secret communication with him. Letters and money have reached His Majesty in a most mysterious manner. You seem mightily interested in the affairs of the day, girl. What is the opinion of my honored uncle at the present moment? Is he Roundhead or Royalist?"

"The Colonel be bitter against the King."

"Then I shall have a pleasant welcome! D'you call this half a mile? My ankles will be as twisted as my hair if I have much farther to walk. Six days on the road with nothing to eat but venison and beans till I am sick of the sight

of them, and my face a mass of blotches in consequence. And the finish will be a violent outburst of temper from my uncle. Since you know so much, girl, tell me if there is any news of my gallant cousin, Mr. Jasper Copplestone. Oh, if these stones were but boiled!"

"I have heard nothing of him for many years. As a young lad he went over to Cromwell with his father—to save his lands, so they say. Jasper Copplestone be a traitor like his father—a turncoat. I do detest him. Annis Twisden was born a Roundhead, and I can understand that, but for one whose ancestors have been the friends of kings 'tis a most unworthy action to desert their master in time of stress to save their lands and money."

"Mercy me, girl! Who are you to speak with such animosity and authority? A beggar—a slovenly cinder wench to question the doings of my cousin, Mr. Jasper Copplestone!"

Mistress Myrtilla stood in the frozen rut with muff uplifted, eyes blazing, and Temperance turned and faced her calmly. Indignation had brought an exquisite rose blush to her face, her lips were very red, and in her great brown eyes there was a hint of merriment as well as anger.

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That the playmate of her childhood had deserted the good cause was a painful memory to Temperance; up to the age of nearly seven Jasper Copplestone had been as a brother to her, but since the day when her father's house had been razed to the ground she had never seen him. He had vanished out of her life into Cromwell's army, and never returned to Winchelsea.

Yet there must have been something in the witch's maiden which mystified Mistress Myrtilla, for without waiting for an answer the angry lady demanded to be told her name.

"Temperance Farncombe, at your service," and the girl curtsied with grace and maybe a little malice.

The name evidently conveyed nothing to Mistress Myrtilla; she drew herself up very haughtily, and made a sign to Temperance to walk on in front.

"We will not discuss politics," she said. "To escape them I have left London, and I have no desire to listen to the opinions of a tatterdemalion. But one thing I will say, girl. Your intelligence has increased exceedingly since I met you, though your manners have deteriorated."

"'Tis the effect of your ladyship's company!"

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Mistress Myrtila knew not whether to be angry or pleased, nevertheless she could not refrain from smiling, and told Temperance that she had an exceedingly good complexion.

"Aye, I am up before ten," replied the girl, pertly.

"You would imply that I am a slug-a-bed?" raged Mistress Myrtila. "All my life I have had that odious verse quoted to me because my poor mother had me baptized Myrtila, and here it is hurled at my head by a *gobe-mouche*—a roadside rag-heap!"

In her fury she threw her large muff at Temperance, and the girl caught it nimbly and buried her cold nose in the soft, perfumed fur; thereupon Mistress Myrtila snatched it back, shook it vigorously, and, having nothing else to do, stamped upon the road and asked her foot-boy if they had come to Sussex or to some land inhabited by impertinent savages.

And so they proceeded to Copplestone House; but when they reached the handsome wrought-iron gate and Temperance would have left Mistress Myrtila Copplestone to proceed alone, the lady would have none of it and insisted upon Temperance accompanying her.

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"If the place does not please me, I shall go to the inn at Winchelsea," she said, "and you must conduct me hither. This drive is very badly kept."

"The Colonel could not pay his servants, so most have gone for soldiers."

"Oh, if the wars would but cease!"

Mistress Myrtilla's white eyelids drooped over her eyes for an instant, and she sighed sadly, and appeared lost in thoughts of her own till they reached the great oaken door, which was opened by a serving-maid as they approached. Mistress Myrtilla stated her name, related her plight, and walked into the house with an air of ownership which left the serving-maids gaping. Temperance, trembling with delight and excitement, followed her, much to the horror of the maids, who looked upon her with fear and resentment.

It was the first time Temperance had been into a gentleman's house since her own had been burned down, and a little thrill of pleasure passed through her. The wide polished hall with silver candelabra, and the heads of stags upon the walls, pleased her greatly, and following close on the heels of Mistress Myrtilla, lest she

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should be turned out, she entered a large and beautiful room where, as a child, she had often played at kyles with Jasper on a wet day. Aye, they had stood their ninepins up near one of the large windows, and taking their stand in front of the virginals on which Jasper's mother used to play sweet music, they rolled their little wooden balls over the exquisite carpet which one of Jasper's uncles had brought from the far land of Persia.

There was an immense fire in the grate; faded velvet curtains hung from the windows, pictures from the walls; books were piled upon the tables; large chairs upholstered in tapestry stood invitingly about, and there was a pleasant gleam of brass, and an odor of good cooking wafting in from the kitchen quarters.

The serving-maids stood hesitating at the door, but Mistress Myrtilla flung herself into a large chair near the fire, placed her feet on the hearth, and heaved a sigh of content. She handed her muff to Temperance, who placed it upon the table, then went and stood behind the lady's chair, waiting the next command.

"After my adventures, this is indeed comfort," said the lady. "I will not go to the inn. Indeed,

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I will not go to France, for this is a very convenient place in which to rest awhile. Now Mr. Edmund Prideaux has established what he is pleased to call a Post Office in London, for the weekly conveyance of letters, and I would like to know whether I can post from here, girl."

But the serving-girl knew nothing of post offices, and only looked scared, murmuring that Colonel Coplestone certainly had letters conveyed to London sometimes.

"A regular hole of a place," sighed the lady, and stretching out her hand took a book from the table and looked at it curiously. "Mr. Shakespeare's plays—I knew not that my uncle had a taste for literature. I saw Mr. Milton a few weeks back; since the death of the Protector he has retired to private life and is writing a poem which I consider has some value. He is very poor and in ill health."

"Who is Master Milton?" questioned Temperance, trying her best to follow Mistress Myrtilla's swift changes of subject.

"He was His Highness' Latin secretary. Put Mr. Shakespeare's plays back on the table; the volume is too heavy for my hand and I am weary. Girls, prepare me a room and light a

fire in it, for I am perished. Ha! I hear my uncle's voice."

Colonel Coppleson had encountered the broken-down coach upon the road, and entered the room in a great state of perturbation.

"Mistress Myrtilla!" he cried. "What is the meaning of this? I thought you were safe with your father in London!"

Myrtilla got up, curtsied low, then offered her face to her uncle to kiss, which he did with very bad grace.

"London is not particularly safe for the moment, my dear uncle," she said, "and I fancied a little country air. Jasper has made it most unpleasant for me in certain quarters of London, and now that my father has hied him up north to consult with General Monk, I could not stay alone in our great house. At first I thought of joining my Lady Nevill in Paris, but now I think it is too far away, and beg your hospitality for a brief space."

"I cannot have you here when your father—my brother—is known to support the infamous policy of that rascally General Monk. You must go to Paris. I will see you to a ship."

"Paris is such a long way off, and I would be

on the spot to welcome the King when he returns. Come, uncle, no scowls. 'Tis nearly sure that the King must return before long. But there—I promise not to speak politics, and I will be as sweet and docile as a turtle dove. Nevertheless, you had better know the worst at once. I am betrothed to Colonel Hasteville Vane, one of the King's companions in exile, and the twin brother of Sir Godfrey Vane, whose name is a byword in London, and has, I should think, penetrated even to this backwater. There is a very large price on Sir Godfrey's head."

Then the Colonel lost his temper and stormed. Temperance, half hidden behind the curtains, made sure that she could escape by the window if necessary, nevertheless she could not bring herself to go before seeing the end of this surprising scene, and trusted that the Colonel would not discover her presence. The Colonel ordered horses to be saddled for himself and his niece, thereupon Mistress Myrtila burst into noisy tears, choked, gurgled in her throat, screamed that she was about to swoon, and flopped all in a heap over the arm of the big chair. The maids burnt a feather under her nose, offered her wine,

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and gradually she came to and begged in a very meek voice to be helped to bed.

"If you turn me out now, uncle, *sans* money, *sans* food, *sans* everything, I shall die by the roadside," she sobbed. "Indeed, I am in a terrible plight! My father will be killed if there is fighting in York. I shall never behold my betrothed again, and have no home. Considering my friends in London would not shelter me because of the dangerous behavior of your son Jasper, you do indeed owe me something. I will take the road tomorrow, but today I must have a bed. Girl, is that fire lighted? I feel that I shall swoon again soon."

"Tomorrow you shall go," fumed the Colonel. "And let me tell you, Mistress Myrtilla, that I lay the blame of what you call my son Jasper's dangerous behavior at your door. Tomorrow you go from here."

"Yes, yes," murmured the lady, tottering out of the room supported by two serving-maids. "I pray you see to my coach and my starving men till then. Tomorrow I go."

Left alone, Temperance opened the window, clambered out, and fled away, shaking with suppressed laughter.

CHAPTER XV

Temperance Uses Diplomacy



THE NEWS OF MISTRESS Myrtilla's arrival spread like wildfire. The afternoon following her invasion of Colonel Coplestone's house her footmen were swaggering outside "The Four Alls," ordering ale in lordly manner, and her footboy was running all over the town in search of a certain book of cutwork embroidery patterns, and gold thread. All he could obtain was a little coarse canvas and some fine red wool, but his errand set the town atalking.

If the young lady contemplated embroidery,

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it looked as if she intended staying the winter, which was very surprising, considering that her political views were known to be in opposition to those of her uncle. And betrothed to the brother of Sir Godfrey Vane, the arch-conspirator! Lordy! lordy! what were things coming to?

Nevertheless, the town was impressed by the airs and graces of these flighty Londoners; the very voices of Mistress Myrtilla's coachmen were rich and grand, and the figure of her foot-boy all nipped into a brown suit with gold and red barred sleeves, and love-locks hanging from beneath his broad hat, caused many an eye to blink. The dull, desolate little town buckled too, and decided to make the most of its opportunity. Times were so bad, and trade so scarce that the townfolk decided to shut their eyes to Mistress Myrtilla's political views, and do a little bit of business while they could. It was so long since they had had a lady of quality to cater for, that they were all aflutter with excitement. Temperance, who was lingering in the churchyard, watching the footmen drinking the King's health quite openly and gossiping with the passers-by, soon perceived what was afoot, and back she raced to the cottage at a great speed.

"Mistress!" she panted. "Mistress Myrtila is not gone and the whole town be setting out to win her patronage. The apothecary's daughter be going with drugs as stale as last year's baking, the carpenter with picture frames, the cook-woman with honey and jam cakes, and the mercer has promised to get patterns of birds and fruit for embroidery. 'Tis an opportunity. I must go with simples and the pomade. I cannot abide to be outdone! I know she will receive me. She took a fancy to me. I saw it in her manner, although she was so curt of tongue."

Temperance stopped for lack of breath, seated herself on the bench, and pressed her hand to her heart to still its beating.

"And all this because the lady has a silken gown and a haughty manner," scoffed Mother Ursula.

"'Tis so long since we have seen either! Can I go? I will push in with the others, unnoticed. Let me go, Mistress."

"Go if you will. Experience alone will teach you; I cannot."

Away danced Temperance, very happy and contented, and arranged a basket of dried herbs with great care. Beneath the herbs she placed

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a pot of the famous Egyptian pomade, and a haddock bone wrapped in a piece of clean white linen.

"If the weather becomes very cold, no doubt her delicate person will be afflicted with pains and chilblains," thought the girl, "so I will take the haddock bone in which I have great faith as a talisman, and celery seeds to steep in hot water as a cure for chilblains. If she would but stay all the winter! Now that I am deprived of Annis's companionship, it be very lonely, and I prefer Mistress Myrtilla's haughty condescension to nothing at all."

Finding it irksome to wait until the next morning before presenting herself at Copplestone House, she worked all day with double energy, and collected a large quantity of driftwood, which she piled neatly at the back of the cottage, and in the evening she helped Mother Ursula to spin.

The wind whistled up from the sea, the waves crashed upon the bank of shingle, and Richard settled himself down in Mother Ursula's lap to keep warm.

"The winter be here good and strong," thought Temperance as she went to bed.

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At nine o'clock the following morning, spruced up and as trim as her attire allowed, Temperance was at the gates of Coppelstone House with several others, and so gay did she feel that the black looks bestowed upon her by her fellows failed to damp her spirits. However much the sweet slug-a-bed might scowl, or however tart her tongue, Temperance felt equal to the occasion, and looked forward to a battle of words ending in a friendly neutrality which was most enthralling. Therefore she pushed her way to the front, and so angry was the apothecary's daughter that she turned upon her furiously.

"Who are you to come selling your spells here?" she cried. "Last new moon I saw you cutting your hair on the seashore, and while I looked you turned into a hare and raced away over the marshes."

"And when I was walking on the marshes a few days back a hare crossed my path, and I have been unlucky ever since," said the cook-woman, giving the girl a suspicious glance. "We all know that witches change themselves into hares."

"Mistress Coppelstone will have nothing to do with such truck," said a third, and as by now

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they had reached the back door of the Colonel's mansion, the apothecary's daughter went simpering up to the stout man who opened it, and begged to be admitted into the presence of Mistress Myrtilla, asking at the same time the state of the lady's health.

"She lies abed till ten o'clock," was the reply. "She is very feeble and given to the vapors if she rises early. Last night she was taken with violent pains in her inside, and was put to bed with a good posset of hot milk curdled with wine, and highly spiced. It has done her good, but she cannot continue her journey today. I will see whether she is fit to receive you."

After a few minutes he returned and said that Mistress Myrtilla would give them an audience in her bedchamber when her hair was dressed, and meanwhile they could wait in the kitchen.

"But look who has come along with us!" screamed the apothecary's daughter.

"I am not blind," replied the Colonel's man, and picking up a broom which stood against the wall he made a lunge at Temperance and told her to be off.

"Mistress Myrtilla will see me, too," cried the girl. "I know she will! I pray you tell her 'tis

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the maiden who conducted her here a few days back."

Wasting no words, the man struck at her with the broom, and to defend herself Temperance lifted the basket, which caught the blow, and out fell the bunches of herbs, the precious pomade, the haddock bone in its clean wrapping. Spying the haddock bone, the man slipped it into his own pocket, and charging Temperance to clear up the litter and begone, he returned to the house and slammed the door.

Tears of bitter disappointment welled into Temperance's eyes, blinding her so that she could hardly see the bunches of herbs which she was gathering up. Tenderly she placed the little dried bundles in the basket for so sore at heart was she that there was no anger in her.

"To be shunned all my life," she sobbed. "They will tell Mistress Myrtilla that I am a witch, and never again will she speak to me. Maybe she has forgotten me already."

Dabbing her eyes with the cuff of her sleeve, she went slowly away, and not having the heart to return and tell Mother Ursula of her failure, she tramped resolutely along the road, and up the hill to "The Four Alls." She would try and

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sell the pomade to Dame Pepper; she must take some money home with her, for here was winter breathing upon them, and they dared not touch the few gold pieces hidden in the rafters for fear of what the future might bring forth. If only they could procure a good stock of flour, a little wool for clothing, and a supply of salt they could weather the cold, but this year money was scarcer than ever, and with the exception of the coins she had obtained from the masked fugitive Mother Ursula had been obliged to lower her prices considerably.

By the time she reached the alehouse Temperance's tears had dried and her face glowed with health and warmth if not with pleasure, for she ran up the hill to forget her disgrace. The good dame received her kindly, and looked at the pomade with much interest. She smelled it, dipped a little out of the pot with her finger, rubbed it hesitatingly on her nose, then looked at herself anxiously in the mirror.

"I see no difference," she grumbled.

"It will take a little time to act," soothed Temperance. "Use it regularly and I assure you that you will not be troubled with chaps or sore places on the skin all winter."

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After long argument Dame Pepper decided to buy it, and noticing that the girl was not in her usual spirits, offered her a plate of cold pork and a mug of ale, which were gratefully accepted.

"Why are you so kind to me?" asked Temperance, seating herself at the table and looking reflectively at the good food placed before her.

Dame Pepper was too surprised to reply for a minute or two, but after a while she said with a sigh:

"Well, Temperance, I suppose I be fond of you after a fashion. And 'tis on my conscience that I never offered you a home when—when misfortune fell upon you. But what could I do? I dared not. Sometimes—at night—methinks I hear the gallant Colonel Farncombe galloping through Winchelsea, bringing the news of the King's execution, and then I remember you living with a witch. 'Tis strange to think of you as Colonel Farncombe's daughter; he was a very brave gentleman, though his views were wrong."

"'Tis comforting to know that somebody likes me," murmured Temperance. "Would you walk into church with me one Sunday morning, Mistress Pepper?"

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"There was a time when I would not, but I am getting old, Temperance, and am tired of turmoil, and can no longer be troubled to punish the sinners. I leave that to others now. Besides, I do not believe you to be a witch. Yes, I would walk to church with you."

In an ecstasy of gratitude Temperance sprang up and kissed the large, fat hand hanging rather helplessly at Dame Pepper's side, and she felt the other one patting her head kindly.

"There, there," sighed the mistress of "The Four Alls." "I will give you some dough cake and honey. Take a good dollop, my girl."

Food and drink seemed the only means by which Dame Pepper could express herself, and having set these dainties before Temperance she hurried out to the kitchen to superintend her cook-woman, for it was baking-day, and the delicious odor of fresh bread was wafted into the ale-room in which Temperance sat.

Suddenly the street door was pushed open and in came Annis Twisden, warmly cloaked and hooded in dark gray homespun, and her sweet flower face looking out from the cumbersome frill of her hood expressed surprise upon seeing Temperance.

"Oh, Annis! 'Tis months since I set eyes on you!" exclaimed Temperance, and flinging her arms round her friend she kissed her affectionately.

"My father made me promise that I would never come to the cottage again," whispered Annis. "But I did not promise never to speak to you, Temperance. Dear heart, I am most unhappy."

"No news of Andrada?"

"None."

"Nor of the masked stranger?"

"No. The rumors afloat trouble me greatly."

"That Andrada was Sir Godfrey Vane playing a trick on you to stir up strife among the people?"

"Yes; but I do not believe it. I trust Andrada still. I will wed no other man, however much my father tries to force me. Did you hear what he did with the bar of wood from the gate?"

"No."

"He drove nails into it, saying that each nail was entering Andrada's heart; then he burned the wood upon the fire, saying it was Andrada burning, and all the time I stood by watching. Oh, I was in an agony, and as soon as I could I

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ran to the church and begged Parson Dixwell to take the curse off Andrada. He is praying, and I am praying, and fasting Wednesdays and Fridays, and giving all I have to the poor. Sometimes I be distracted, thinking of Andrada pining away on the roadside, and then I wish he could be Sir Godfrey and thus escape the curse. In that case he could be naught to me again, but I would rather lose him and die an old maid than think of him dying some awful death."

"No wonder you look so pale, my sweet," said Temperance, drawing her toward the fire and pushing her gently into the chimney seat. "A most amazing idea has just occurred to me. Do you know that Mistress Myrtilla Copplestone is sojourning with her uncle?"

Annis nodded, and pushing back her hood revealed her white cap exquisitely embroidered with the trailing vetch which she had copied faithfully from the little plants growing in the hedge-groves.

"She is betrothed to Colonel Hasteville Vane, Sir Godfrey's brother," continued Temperance. "Go and see her, Annis, and ask her straight out whether Sir Godfrey be Andrada."

"Oh, I couldn't! I couldn't! It would break my heart to know the truth and prove my betrothed false."

"But if he be Sir Godfrey why should he be false?"

"Would Sir Godfrey Vane wed a milkmaid, a farmer's daughter?"

"It has been done before. King Cophetua, a wealthy monarch of Africa, wedded a beggar maid whom he saw from his window, and the mother of King William the Conqueror was a beautiful young washerwoman. Mother Ursula told me so when we were discussing your betrothal."

"There must have been something passing strange about them which I lack. I be neither beggar-maid, nor washwoman, but a most commonplace girl. Had it been you, Temperance, with so lovely a face and so tragic a history, there would have been some hope, but I cannot see myself the lady of a nobleman. No. Be he Andrada or the King's companion, I am in a most distressing situation."

Then in came bustling Dame Pepper, and having bargained with her over a load of fodder

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and some wool, Annis rose to go, and Temperance followed her.

"Unless you would rather not walk with me, Annis," she said, hanging her head sadly.

"Yes, come. My father has gone away for some days. Tell no one, Temperance, but he left yesterday, and I do not think it possible for him to be back within the week. Maybe he has gone to London."

Once out of sight of the town, Annis took her friend's arm affectionately, and so great was the joy of Temperance at seeing the girl again that she related the incident of the morning as if it were a joke, and laughed about it.

"'Tis a shame!" burst out Annis. "If ever I have a house of my own, Temperance, you are welcome to it; you shall be my honored guest. I wish you could come in now and sit with me in the parlor with the wood paneling! I have lit a big fire, for I am tired of the kitchen, and I have a chicken stuck with cloves for dinner. Dear heart, do not look at me like that. I dare not ask you in, because my father would horse-whip me did I do such a thing. He does truly believe you to be a wicked witch."

"I have had a very hearty meal already, and

could not eat even chicken stuck with cloves," laughed Temperance, a little bitterly. "I wonder, Annis, would you do me a great favor?"

"If it is possible."

"Will you go to Coppelstone House on some pretext and—discreetly—ask Mistress Myrtilla if she desires to see the beggar-girl who directed her there? Say I have sweet herbs, and precious pomade for the complexion, but the servants will not let me in."

"I would certainly tell her that, but on what pretext can I go? I have nothing to sell, and she would not countenance a farmer's daughter coming on a friendly visit."

"Sir Godfrey Vane be the only pretext."

"Oh, Temperance!"

The soft blue eyes of Annis Twisden scanned the gray sea washing the shore below, and she shivered. For some time she was silent, and at last she said, firmly:

"I will go. Better to know for certain than to have this fear hanging upon me. I will not tell her that I am betrothed to Andrada, but I will say that a stranger supposed to be Sir Godfrey Vane was here, and maybe she would like some news of him to send to his brother Colonel

Hasteville Vane. The sorrows and trials of these days make unusual conduct seem possible. I will go now before my courage wanes."

"And I will hide in the hedge outside the farm at eventide, then will you come out and tell me the result?"

Annis promised, and fearing to harm her friend by being seen in her company, Temperance would not accompany her to Coppleshone House, but after wishing her an affectionate adieu left her to go on alone, while she returned to the cottage.

Mother Ursula was in no way surprised at Temperance's reception at Coppleshone House, for it was what she had expected; she also smiled cunningly at the diplomacy which Temperance had used to obtain an interview with the sweet slug-a-bed.

"What is your reason for wishing to see her, Temperance Farncombe?" she asked, suddenly.

"'Tis but an idea that I have at the back of my brain," said Temperance, evasively.

"Leave it alone. Seek not to probe into matters that do not concern you."

"It does concern me."

"How?"

Nodding her head wisely, Temperance went over to the fire and stirred the pot hanging there; it contained a vegetable stew, and the steam issuing from it was strongly perfumed with onions.

"A little dried mint will give it a good flavor," murmured Temperance. "Richard, shall we play hide and seek?"

Richard croaked his consent, Mother Ursula lifted her shoulders impatiently and said no more concerning Mistress Myrtilla, so telling the raven not to peep, Temperance took the skull from the table, hid it behind a sack of beans, and played merrily with the bird while she prepared the meal.

At eventide she crept into a hole in Master Twisden's hedge, and after a short space of time Annis came out to her.

"I cannot stay, Temperance," she whispered. "My father has bidden the apothecary's daughter to keep company with me till he returns, and there she be, as sour as vinegar and as suspicious as an ape. I saw Mistress Myrtilla. So scared was I at first that I could hardly speak, but when I became accustomed to her manner I liked her in spite of her scornful tongue. She

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could tell me nothing of Andrada, but was right interested in him, saying that she would write a letter to her betrothed and tell him what she had heard concerning his brother. She looks very well, but says she is too delicate to travel yet awhile. Then I spoke of you."

"What did you say?"

"What you told me, and added that you were the daughter of Colonel Farncombe, and most wickedly reputed to be a witch. Mistress Myrtilla clasped her hands in joy at that, and said there was nothing she desired more than to speak with a witch."

"She little knows what it is to be thought a witch."

"Nay; and she wishes to have her horoscope read. I told her you could not do that, and when she heard of Mother Ursula and the black bowl she trembled with fright, and told me to bid you come and see her on Friday. She be all agog to see you."

"I must go and see her?"

"Aye, at ten o'clock in the evening, because she lies abed in the morning to get back her strength. The Colonel, she said, would be away, and she will give orders to her footboy to let

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you in through the window of the room where Mr. Shakespeare's plays are lying on the table. At ten o'clock, Temperance, next Friday evening. Tap three times on the window. Good night, dear friend. I dare not stay."

As she ran back through the frosty darkness Temperance heard a solitary curlew lifting his ghostly voice down on the shore, and she called back joyfully to him, amused that he should answer her. But he soon found out that she was not one of his kind, and remained silent while Temperance ran on alone in the quietness of the night, well pleased with the result of her diplomacy.

CHAPTER XVI

Temperance Learns the Secret of the Masked Stranger



TEMPERANCE WAS BIT-
terly cold as she made her way
cautiously through Colonel Cop-
plestone's shrubbery. Her hood
was drawn closely over her face,
and she hugged the cowhide round
her shoulders, but her hands were blue, and
swollen with chilblains.

The marsh was frozen hard, and it was a
business to get water. All the afternoon Temper-
ance had been hacking ice from a pool, carrying

it home in buckets, melting it over the fire, and she was very weary.

But so beautiful was the night decked in its jewels of frost, with a thin sprinkling of snow upon trees and ground, that for a moment Temperance forgot the hardships of winter in admiration of its beauty.

On reaching the Colonel's house she knocked gently on the window with her swollen hand, and almost immediately it was opened and a thin streak of light showed between the velvet curtains.

"Come in quickly or I shall perish with cold," whispered a voice. "You bring a veritable hurricane in with you! I half expected you to fly here on a broomstick."

Temperance was a little surprised to find Mistress Myrtilla alone, but upon reflection she decided that the Colonel's niece was afraid of the consequences which might follow such a visit, and had kept it a secret.

The beautiful room was lighted with candles, a large wood fire blazed up the chimney, and having closed the window and drawn the curtains, Mistress Myrtilla scuttled back to her chair near the hearth. Temperance remained

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standing, and the expression on her face caused Mistress Myrtilla some surprise.

"What is it?" asked the Colonel's niece.
"What has happened to you, girl?"

"Happened? Nothing, my lady."

"Then why do you look so happy?"

"Oh, the night is very lovely, and it is warm in here. Besides, I am glad to see you—'tis a great adventure."

Mistress Myrtilla was silent; she drew together her fur-trimmed mantle which she wore over her silken gown, and put her feet onto the hearth to warm. She was wondering whether she would have the heart to be happy were she wearing a cowhide over her shoulders and if her hands were spoiled with chilblains.

"They tell me you are a witch's serving-maid," she said at last. "Is it true?"

"Aye, it be true."

"Do not say it *be* true? Say it *is* true. I also hear that you are of gentle birth, but you speak very badly for a gentleman's daughter, Temperance Farncombe."

"That will not prevent me from going to heaven!"

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"Such flippancy! Come nearer the fire. Are you a witch?"

"No."

Temperance walked to the fire, and as she stood there, facing Mistress Myrtila, she allowed the cowhide to slip from her shoulders and pushed back her hood, revealing her riotous hair, which shone like pure gold metal in the soft light. Mistress Myrtila sighed heavily, and confessed to herself that she hardly knew how to treat this strange visitor.

"What is this wild story about Sir Godfrey Vane coming here in the guise of a bear leader?" she asked, suddenly.

"That is all there be—is—to it, my lady."

"And this man—whoever he is—has become betrothed to the pretty little milkmaid who came to see me with tears in her eyes?"

"Yes, and I trust Andrada even as Annis Twisden does."

Mistress Myrtila pursed up her lips and looked seriously perturbed; after a time she told Temperance she could sit down, and pulling up a wooden stool the girl did as she was bid, and waited impatiently for Mistress Myrtila to speak.

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"What has become of Colonel Coppleston?" she asked when the silence had lasted too long for her liking. "If he found me here he would horsewhip me."

"He has gone to London. There is much afoot, and so many rumors afloat that he has gone to see for himself what is true. Can you read the future?"

"No, but my mistress can."

"Now listen to me, my girl. I asked you to come here tonight because my future is so dim that sometimes I have fears that it will fade away from me altogether! My father's fortune has gone in the King's cause, my betrothed is penniless, and should he be captured he will lose his head; and here am I with nothing to look forward to save the position of poor relative in my uncle's house. Why are you laughing?"

"Indeed I beg your pardon, Mistress Myrtilla! But little as I know the future, I am convinced that the position of poor relative will never be yours. In another week you will be mistress of the Colonel's house and handling his money for him!"

"I have a mind to box your ears for you, impertinence! I have not come here to weedle my

cousin Jasper out of his inheritance, but in such times as these one must fight for a place, or go under. There is a rumor that the King is ready to promise a general amnesty, a general pardon, to forgive and forget, so that we may all start afresh, and no past offense committed on either side will be punished. 'Tis for that reason that my uncle has gone to London."

"Do you think the Parliament will accept an amnesty, and the King will return?"

"He will not return till recalled by the people, Temperance. The rich and the poor of the land must send him an invitation. At heart the army is his, and the House of Commons is ready to accept an amnesty, but should this great opportunity slip away as so many others have done, 'tis war and misery and bloodshed for us all. Roundhead and Royalist will suffer alike. Oh, I am so tired of it! My courage nearly fails sometimes, and I catch at a straw. I will consult Mother Ursula. I would consult the devil himself if I thought he would give me comfort!"

Dabbing her eyes with a large linen handkerchief, Mistress Myrtila Copplestone jumped out of her chair in a great hurry, and going across to a carved oak cabinet she brought out a

little porcelain box filled with comfits, and offered them to her visitor. For the moment Temperance was too overcome with emotion to take any, but her hand touched that of Myrtilla, which was holding the lovely painted box, and acting upon the impulse of the moment, forgetting that she was a beggar, she clasped the warm hand of the Colonel's niece and smiled into her face.

"What will be will be," she said. "We can only work and hope. I have lost all save hope, and that is a very precious possession."

"It is, and you have given me some tonight. What a pair of fools we must look, holding hands upon a box of sweetmeats! Eat them. They were sent to me from Italy, but they give me the toothache. I have a horror of losing my teeth, and they are none too good at the back."

Temperance seated herself on the stool, placed the little porcelain box on her knees, and as the reference to the toothache gave her the opening she required, she sought carefully in her mind for a few apparently careless words which she hoped would give her the key to the mystery she was determined to solve. Her heart was beating wildly, and she lowered her eyes to the comfits

in case Mistress Myrtilla should guess that she was drawing a bow at a venture.

"The toothache is a very convenient trouble sometimes," she smiled.

"I have never found it anything save a nuisance. When can I come and see your mistress?"

"I will appoint a time and let you know. Our last visitor came on the pretext of buying a cure for the toothache, and brought a mint of trouble on us. Some said he was Sir Godfrey Vane, others the Duke of York, but none suspected him of being Jasper Coplestone."

"Jasper Coplestone? Then you knew he was Jasper and that he is with the King? *Mon Dieu!* What is it you do *not* know? You are a witch indeed!"

Great was the astonishment of Mistress Myrtilla, but greater still was the joy that flooded over Temperance like a wave of pure delight. The playmate of her childhood was true to the cause! Gradually the thought had been germinating in her mind that the masked fugitive was Jasper Coplestone, and now that she had the assurance that this was so she laughed aloud, thinking how easily Mistress Myrtilla had fallen into her trap.

"I did not know for sure!" she cried. "But the Colonel's concern, his bargain with Mother Ursula, the strangeness of the whole matter, set me thinking, and when you spoke of your cousin's doings I became more and more suspicious, till I felt that at any price I must know for certain. My indignation against Jasper was very hot, but now that he has seen the folly of his ways I forgive him. Will you tell me why he has changed thus? Where is he now?"

But Mistress Myrtila was not so easily pacified for having given away such a secret; she spoke hard words to Temperance, and accused her of having learned the truth with the intention of using it to revenge herself upon Colonel Copplestone.

"Trust me," pleaded Temperance. "No one save Mother Ursula and myself know, and as the knowledge has already served its purpose with regard to my mistress, there is nothing to fear from me. I swear to you that I will not use it in any way. And how could it harm Colonel Copplestone?"

Mistress Myrtila explained that in this time of trouble and suspicion it was most likely that the Colonel—who was a faithful adherent to

the army—would be suspected of assisting his son, and maybe arrested as a traitor. Jasper's conduct had made things very unpleasant for his father, for as the Colonel had once been a Royalist, many of his friends were accusing him of playing a double game and working secretly for the reëstablishment of the King. Until quite lately it was not publicly known that Jasper was the private emissary of a certain great general who was in constant communication with Prince Charles, but since the young man had disappeared so dramatically from the governing army, where he had held a high position, it was not very difficult to guess that he had changed his mind with regard to his political views.

"You must remember," said Mistress Myrtila, "that my uncle Copplestone is a true admirer of Cromwell, and went over to him openly and in all good faith, drawing Jasper along with him when he was but a lad of not yet fifteen. Jasper's head was swollen with his father's talk of liberty, and he did not stop to think for himself. After the capture of Dunkirk he returned to England, and the misery here, and the poverty of discharged soldiers and sailors of both parties, preyed upon his mind. Very often he

came and talked to me, and at last he decided that peace could only come to us through our sovereign. He sent in his resignation to his chief, and I put him in communication with my betrothed, Colonel Hasteville Vane, who was then in Holland. There was a price on Jasper's head when he escaped and took refuge here. But blood is thicker than water, Temperance, and when the Colonel learned from your mistress that his own son was the fugitive for whom the government was looking, he dared not have the witch tried in public, as she threatened to expose Jasper's name. It was a terrible blow to my uncle to hear of his son's conduct. But there is still one little link missing in this chain of circumstances. How did your mistress know so much concerning Jasper?"

"Since you have been so candid with me, Mistress Myrtila, I will tell you. My mistress has been in communication with Sir Godfrey Vane for many years. She went to Rye to meet Andrada, the man with the bear, before he appeared in Winchelsea, and if he be not Sir Godfrey himself, he is certainly in touch with him and knew of Jasper's danger."

"Did Jasper make himself known to you?"

"No. Considering my position and the name I bear, Jasper and my mistress tried to shield me from further harm by keeping me in ignorance. Many a time have I railed against Mother Ursula for her lack of confidence, but now I see that it was a kindly spirit of protection. Are we friends, Mistress Myrtilla?"

The large, flashing eyes of Myrtilla Coppelstone swept over the witch's maiden, and they penetrated beneath that ragged exterior and beheld the indomitable courage which shone in her lovely face, and the grace and dignity of her slender person.

"'Tis not the case of making friends," said Myrtilla. "We are friends, for we are welded together by a destiny which is stronger than ourselves, and taking each one of us alone, we should most certainly fall without the help of the other. What a very odd company we are! Myself, you, your mistress, Jasper, Sir Godfrey, Andrada, and the bear!"

"And Annis Twisden."

"I should call poor little Annis Twisden a complication! She cannot fight as we do; she lacks courage."

"Indeed she does not! You do not know Annis.

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She is small and quiet, but she is the veritable honey of life—sweetness itself. You should see her fight for the lives of her lambs and calves, and her sick cows. Timid she be, but no coward. Annis can face a danger. Look at her now. Kept almost a prisoner by her father, racked with anxiety, yet ready to take the road with Andrada and the bear, and she, after a fashion, almost as delicately nurtured as yourself, Mistress Myrtilla, if you will forgive the comparison.”

“You are a good friend, Temperance Farncombe. Now had it been you with your lovely face and that mass of curling gold upon your head who had taken the fancy of a romantic wayfarer, I should have been in no way surprised. I can see you upon the King’s highroad, or even going out to the American colonies, but Annis Twisden—no. Destiny is an amazing thing; it throws the most unlikely people together. A quiet farm, a pasty to bake, a little washing to do would bring happiness to the farmer’s daughter, yet perhaps such a life will never be hers.”

Then something cold seemed to clutch at Temperance’s heart, and a little sense of panic seized her for an instant. Vividly there rose be-

fore her mind's eye her father's house—the pictures of her ancestors upon the walls, the polished table on which the oranges reflected their beautiful colors, the rich hangings, her own little carved bed. Would she ever know such security again? She tossed up her head, laughed, and the little fear vanished. No, it had not proved to be security; there was no such thing as security.

"Some of us be born adventurers," she smiled. "Like Christopher Columbus, we are ready to risk all for the hope of the unknown. I do not like living in a hovel and suffering from the bitter cold, but if I had to choose between baking a little bread or taking a fine ship and setting out for America, 'twould be the latter that I would do. I would love to see the New World! Yet perhaps it will be Annis to whom adventure will come while I stay quietly at home. But 'tis very late. I must be returning."

"Tomorrow I will come to your cottage and make an appointment with Mother Ursula to have my future read."

"You are not afraid? She is a witch."

"I have but a pleasant fear. Can you assure me that she will not set a curse on me?"

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"Yes; I promise you that."

Fastening her fur-trimmed cloak at the neck, Mistress Myrtilla went across to the window, and opened it for her guest to depart. As she was pushing her hair into her hood Temperance asked yet another question.

"Is it true that you do not know Andrada?" she whispered.

"I have spoken the truth," was the stern reply. "Think you that I would trouble to tell lies to beggars and milkmaids?"

Temperance was deeply hurt by the quick change of tone, and making a humble obeisance she scrambled through the window and disappeared into the darkness.

"I will see you tomorrow, Temperance," came the conciliating murmur of Myrtilla's voice as she put her head out of the window, and it brought back the pleasant feeling of contentment to Temperance.

Smiling to herself, the witch's maiden returned as quickly as the night permitted, and as she approached the cottage she saw a dark shadow glide from the door and vanish in the direction of the bank of shingle. Taking to her heels, Temperance raced up the garden and beat

vigorously upon the door, which was already closed.

"Who was your visitor, mistress?" she exclaimed as she stepped inside.

"Some madman."

"Some madman?"

"Aye, some demented creature who has sworn not to cut his hair till the King returns. What good it can do to His Majesty to have a subject who is gradually acquiring the appearance of an ape is beyond my comprehension. I gave him a dish of beans and told him to be off. I will deal with no more strangers. Well, what have you learned this evening?"

While she was relating how she had obtained the secret of the masked fugitive's identity Temperance was wondering whether Mother Ursula had told her the whole truth concerning the shadow which had sped away to the shore. Why go to the shore at midnight? Experience having at last taught her when to hold her tongue, the girl asked no questions and said no more about the matter.

CHAPTER XVII

Voices in the Wind



HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR THE companionship of Myrtilla Coplestone, that winter would have been a tedious one for Temperance. Owing to the continual frost, she was greatly troubled with chilblains, and all work seemed doubly hard.

Sometimes Annis would waylay her at Dame Goody Pepper's, and there passed a whispered word between them, but so sharp was the watch that Jeremy Twisden kept upon his daughter that their friendship was now only a secret bond, like so many others during those hard times.

But Temperance did not see much of Myrtilla, for it was too cold for the lady to go out, and as she had had a violent dispute with Mother Ursula concerning the reading of her future, she never went near the cottage when she took her walks abroad accompanied by her serving-maid and her footboy.

Mistress Myrtilla's interview with Mother Ursula was a most unfortunate affair. She had annoyed the witch by beating Richard with her ebony stick, screaming at the sight of Phineas, and using the most peremptory language to hide the fear which stole over her upon beholding the black bowl, the hank of colored wool, and the skull. Mother Ursula and Myrtilla Copplestone were like two sparks which, united, flared to a flame, and in her anger the witch took the black bowl and flung the contents on to the path leading to the cottage door, and the water froze upon the ground.

"GO!" she screamed, and with Richard flapping at her heels out went Mistress Myrtilla, uttering a stream of abuse.

"Land shark! Pilferer! Sorceress!" she cried.

"Am I, indeed!" shrieked Mother Ursula.

"You shall have your money's worth! Look at the frozen water. There lies your future. I wish you joy. A pretty figure of a man—an ape!"

Standing in the narrow path, Mistress Myrtilla saw that the water had frozen into the shape of a man's head, and her face paled with terror, for it was a very horrible portrait. Long and shaggy hair fell over the face, the foolish mouth protruded, and a straggling beard fell thinly over a pointed chin. Mistress Myrtilla forgot her delicacy, the cold, her inability to walk over rough ground, and she fled away with her silks and velvets billowing around her. Indeed it was no wonder that Mistress Myrtilla never set foot on that part of the marsh again, but so terror-stricken was she that she sent her footboy to watch for Temperance, and to make an appointment with her.

Temperance promised to meet Myrtilla as she came out of church one Wednesday morning, and upon beholding her the lady told the witch's maiden to walk three paces behind, and reply when she was spoken to. Obediently Temperance did as she was bid, and as they passed "The Four Alls" a terrible sight met their eyes which

caused Mistress Myrtila to swoon in all good faith.

On the bench outside the inn there lounged a horrible creature who was certainly a man but had the appearance of an ape. He was bent, hatless, garbed in a sheepskin, and his long, matted hair fell over his face, from which two half-closed eyes gazed timidly. Recognizing in him the portrait formed by the frozen water from the witch's bowl, Mistress Myrtila uttered not one word, but crumpled up like a starched hood caught in the rain, and collapsed upon the frosty ground.

Trembling with fear, Temperance flung herself between Mistress Myrtila and the horrible creature who hobbled to their assistance, and out came Dame Goody Pepper. Between them they carried Myrtila into the alehouse, burned feathers beneath her nose, and gradually she recovered, and looked around with terrified eyes.

Dame Pepper explained that the cause of all this trouble was a poor ninny called George Kent who had sworn to remain unshaven till the King sat on the throne again.

"He arrived here some weeks ago," said Dame Pepper. "I allow him to sleep in a cor-

ner of my stable, and he pays his way, for he has a little money. A harmless booby, madam; a dunderpate, but one who would not harm a fly."

"So hideous to behold," faltered Mistress Myrtilla. "I pray you find me a carriage to take me home, for my legs refuse to carry me."

Now it happened that Annis Twisden passed at that moment, and hailing her from the window Mistress Myrtilla begged for a lift in the rough farm cart. Nothing would induce her to wait for a chair or a carriage; in the farm cart she would go, and immediately. They made her as comfortable as possible. Annis told her driver to walk on ahead, and taking the reins herself she begged Temperance to mount with them, and off they went.

"Has the cold troubled you, madam?" asked Annis, kindly. "It cuts like a knife today, but the thaw is coming. I feel it on the edge of the air."

But when Temperance explained the cause of Mistress Myrtilla's indisposition Annis looked surprised.

"Of a truth he is very ugly," she said, "but I have spoken to him several times, and he has

a sweet manner. A simpleton, madam, with a strange idea in his head. 'Tis easy to see that he has known better days when you speak to him."

"But why did you address such a creature, Annis?" asked Mistress Myrtilia, eagerly.

A soft rose-leaf tint flushed into Annis's pale face.

"I heard that he had been turned out of Oxford, madam, for causing a disturbance, and, wondering whether he knew Andrada, I questioned him discreetly. Strangely enough, he saw Andrada a year back, but could give me no recent news of him. But because he once knew Andrada and shared a tankard of beer with the bear I could feel no disgust toward him, and I gave him a little food, the weather being so cold."

Then Mistress Myrtilia behaved in a most surprising fashion—she burst into tears. Rocking herself backward and forward, she wept and sobbed, and Temperance could not comfort her.

"Oh, take it not so to heart," she pleaded. "How is it possible that such a creature can affect you? Mother Ursula was angry that day, and said the first thing that came into her head;

it is only a very amazing coincidence. Do not let it weigh upon your mind."

Annis, who knew nothing about the picture made by the frozen water, looked upon the two with startled eyes, but asked no questions. After a time Myrtila wiped her face with her handkerchief, and it would seem that if she did not cry she must laugh, for laugh she did, but very quaintly.

"I wished to speak to you, Temperance, concerning your mistress's statements, for I confess that I was afraid, and here is the first part of her forecast come true. How could I help but faint when I beheld the ape creature? But I am getting the better of it. Let me rest a little."

She closed her eyes, and did not speak again till they reached the gates of Copplestone House, where she insisted upon getting down and walking. Having thanked Temperance for coming to meet her, she then went up to Annis and took her hand in both of her own.

"Annis Twisden," she said, and her voice was very solemn, "I will stand by you, come what may. Whatever the future holds for you, I will help you to deal with it."

Then she went swiftly away, and the two girls looked after her with great anxiety in their eyes.

"What did she mean?" asked Annis; but Temperance could only shake her head and whisper the story of the frozen water into Annis's ear.

"Oh," said Annis, "racked as I am concerning Andrada, I would no more go to a witch to learn my future than I would fly. Look at Mistress Myrtilla—she is distraught now, and all because Mother Ursula trusts to the black art instead of to the Almighty. Why do you look at me so strangely?"

Temperance put her hand over her eyes to shut out the vision of Annis toiling miserably up the hill, and because she could not bear to think of it she turned to go.

"Stay one moment, Temperance. I have a secret to tell you—one which I learned from the poor loony George Kent. He says that Jasper Copplestone is with Prince Charles, and 'twas he whom you hid in the cave."

"I know."

Annis was so amazed that she could not reply, but, seeing Colonel Copplestone come riding through his gates, she drove away, and Temperance ran off over the marsh.

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She was sure now that George Kent was a spy, and she was puzzled. As she ran she sniffed the air in search of the thaw which Annis had predicted, and sure enough she felt it on the ice-cold breath of the sea. So glad was she that she sang for joy, and a flutter of excitement ran through her. Spring was coming! Spring, and the tender green plants, the sand martins and the lambs. Soon it would be May, the month when even the industrious bees went mad for one joyous hour and swarmed in the trees, and the young men and maidens danced round the Maypole. Temperance forgot her chilblains in thinking of the marry month of May, but, alas! the thaw was a very gradual one.

At last March came blustering in like a roaring lion, bringing good news. What the news was Temperance could not guess, but she felt it in the breath of the wind, and Mother Ursula went walking abroad again, for she felt it, too. Over the marshes she went on her silent, mysterious journeys which Temperance knew were in connection with the King's return, though Mother Ursula never said so.

Even Annis brightened with the spring, and like a violet freshly opened she went about the

farm with light step, tending all the young things placed in her loving care, and often her blue eyes gazed thoughtfully over the top of her father's well-cut hedge toward the hill.

George Kent, the ape-man, still lingered outside "The Four Alls"; his hair grew longer and more matted, and so strange was he that nobody would go near him. As the warm weather came he wandered down to the marshes and often spoke to Annis, who placed food and drink for him in the hedge. Every day the girl hid some little dainty for the poor dunderpate who had once spoken to her Andrada and shared a tankard of ale with the bear.

In April the sand martins returned. Temperance had been watching the sea anxiously for some days, then her friends returned when she was not there to welcome them. She went over to Camber to fetch clay from the priest's grave, and that very afternoon the sand martins must have arrived, for when she went to the cliffs the following morning they were cleaning out their old homes, burrowing, chattering madly.

Back went Temperance with her hood pushed from her glowing face, and her bare feet spurn-

ing the earth as she ran to tell Mother Ursula the news.

"Mistress!" she cried as she raced through the little herb garden. "The sand martins have come home! All in new feathers—sleek as water—fresh and lovely. Such a number of last year's babies grown up!"

"Aye, I heard them this morning. They know that there is news coming."

"And they be always here for my birthday. They never forget me."

"You be one of those not easy to forget, Temperance."

"Yet Parliament has forgotten me. Do you remember, mistress, how you promised to give me shelter and treat me kindly till Parliament should decide what was to be done with me?"

"Yes, and you screaming and kicking my shins all the way down the hill. You, in your apple-green silk gown and your fine black hat."

"Did you make the offer because you wanted a serving-maid, Mother Ursula?"

"No. I do not hold with serving-maids; they be more of a hindrance than a help."

"Then why did you take me in?"

"It was all I could do for the King. I saved him one loyal subject."

Temperance burst into a peal of merry laughter.

"You will never give me a bit of satisfaction!" she cried. "I thought you would say—for once—that 'twas because you loved me!"

Mother Ursula turned her fierce black eyes upon the girl, and suddenly she pointed toward the hill.

"Go to 'The Four Alls,'" she said. "Maybe the sand martins are not the only wanderers who have returned."

Temperance caught her breath, paled, and observing the trap-like manner in which Mother Ursula's mouth snapped together, she walked slowly away over the marsh. Who would she find at "The Four Alls"? She was incapable of forming any sort of opinion, and as she approached the inn her heart beat rapidly.

The bench near the wall on which the lovely wistaria grew was empty, so Temperance entered the inn, her bare feet making no sound upon the two stone steps which led down to the sanded floor. There she beheld Andrada and the bear. The sailor man had his back toward her

and his head was tilted, for he was draining a great tankard which he held to his lips. George Kent, the loony, was in the same position, also the apothecary and Mistress Myrtila's footboy. Dame Pepper, leaning back against a great oak barrel girded with iron bands, had a strange smile upon her face; Temperance could not decide whether it indicated regret or relief—maybe it was both.

"And what health be you drinking all so solemn?" asked the girl, sharply.

Andrada spun round and came eagerly toward her.

"The witch's maiden—more lovely than ever!" he cried. "'Twas the pledge I was unable to give last time we met. Had you come a moment sooner you could have joined us."

"Aye, the last I saw of you was your heels," said Temperance. "Be it safe for you to show your face now?"

"Maiden, I am always ready to take a risk, but I never court disaster."

"Why have you returned?"

"The reasons are so numerous that I can tell you only one. I am on my way to ask Master Jeremy Twisden for the hand of his daughter

Annis. Will you come with me and hold the bear while I go in?"

"Have nothing to do with the affair, Temperance," said Dame Pepper, earnestly.

But as Temperance met Andrada's eyes all fear left her, and the wild, joyous rumors which she had heard in the wind coming from across the sea seemed to rush upon her, and she was half stifled by the excitement of her speculations. Why could Andrada go unprotected into the presence of Jeremy Twisden when there was a warrant out against him? He was using both his arms, too, and his buff leather coat was clean and tidy. The gold rings flashed in his ears, a little bunch of white violets—always the first to bloom—was pushed into the leather band round his battered hat, and there was an air of victory about him.

"I will come," said Temperance, and she walked quickly away ahead of him, for there was a great lump in her throat.

Dear, sweet Annis, how happy she would be! What mattered it who Andrada was?

"Hi, witch maiden, do not walk so fast!" cried Andrada. "How is your mistress?"

They spoke but little on the way, and at Jer-

emy Twisden's gate the sailor man put the bear's chain into the girl's hand.

"Wish me luck, Temperance," he said.

"God bless you both," she murmured.

For a long time she stood there holding the chain while the bear slept in a patch of sunlight, and when Andrada came out again there was a great red mark across his face. He took the chain, and would have walked away without a word of explanation had not Temperance shaken him by the arm roughly.

"Annis has gone," he said. "He has sent Annis away and he will not tell me where. Maybe it will be years before I can find her."

CHAPTER XVIII

God Save King Charles The Second



HE DISAPPEARANCE OF ANNIS Twisden preyed upon Temperance's mind. Day and night she thought of her friend, probing every possibility, finding no solution. Even Mother Ursula could not tell where she was, though she gazed into the black bowl and threw handfuls of sand upon the floor, but no picture could she see.

Andrada was most desolate. He sat grimly

outside "The Four Alls" with George Kent, the loony, and he made a vow that never again would he drink a pledge till Annis was found. Temperance felt that he was waiting for something; what it was she could not tell.

Even Mistress Myrtilla was concerned about Annis, and one day she waited for Temperance on the marsh and walked with the witch's maiden, who was going to gather cowslips to make an essence for the cure of deafness.

"She must be found," cried Mistress Myrtilla. "It is quite absurd for a girl to vanish in such a manner. Her father has most likely taken her to London. Who are his friends there?"

"How should I know?" questioned Temperance.

"And nobody can *do* anything! There sits Andrada—there you go gathering cowslips—and maybe Annis is on the highseas, being taken off to America! Her father would far sooner send her there than give her hand in marriage to Andrada. I will not have my happiness spoiled for a little milkmaid. She must be found and brought back immediately."

So great was Temperance's astonishment that she let the cowslips fall.

"What has your happiness to do with Annis Twisden?" she asked.

"*Gobe-mouche!* What has a web to do with a spider? Time will tell you why I cannot be happy without Annis Twisden, but methinks that if you had an ounce of brain you would guess!"

With that Myrtilla flounced away, and it was no good Temperance running after her, questioning, pleading, for she would not reply. But her conversation perplexed Temperance. Having gathered the cowslips, she went up to the town, and although to the eye it appeared the same, Temperance knew that it was different. There was expectation on every face; it would seem that a silent fermentation was going on which might burst forth at any moment, but as nobody spoke to the witch's maiden, she learned nothing. There was Andrada—waiting. There was the loony with his matted hair hanging over his face. There was Mistress Myrtilla hurrying into church, but as not one of them had a word to say to Temperance, she went home and helped Mother Ursula make the essence.

The following morning Mother Ursula announced her intention of going up to Winchelsea.

"I have a feeling, Temperance, that something is about to happen," she said.

Temperance had felt it for so long that now she lost heart and refused to accompany her mistress. But when Mother Ursula had been gone about an hour her serving-maid regretted her decision and set out for the town on the hill. She walked despondently, thinking of Annis, and across the marsh she perceived Colonel Coppleson riding at a great pace. Then Master Jeremy Twisden came galloping out of his farm, and behind him ran his cowman and one or two farm hands. Then Temperance hurried, for all her despondency left her, and as she passed the farm gate, out ran the dairymaid and tripped breathlessly away toward the hill.

"I dare not think what it may be," thought the girl, and putting her hand upon the top bar of the gate she leaned upon it and wept.

Was it possible that her father had not died in vain? Would she be able to stand with uplifted head and utter those words which she had repeated after him on the threshold of Farncombe Hall? And Annis not there to hear. Her tears dropped on to that top bar of new wood which replaced the old one on which Andrada

had carved his message, and suddenly an idea came to her. Catching up her apron of sacking, she wiped her eyes and ran toward the farmhouse. In the yard the cocks and hens were picking up food, and in the green field little lambs were playing, but there was no human soul about. Not a man or woman could Temperance see.

"They have all gone to the town," she thought. "Oh, mercy me! Now Annis said he came to the front door, and her father took him into the parlor which is paneled with wood salvaged from the sunken Armada."

Never before had she entered the farm, but now she made her way cautiously across the great kitchen, and into a passage which ran from it—a dark, uneven passage with a wooden stairway at the end and a door in the wall half-way down. Yes, those were the stairs up which Annis climbed when her father sent her to bed on the night of Jasper Copplestone's arrival, and surely that must be the parlor door. Temperance turned the brass handle and looked inside. Yes, it was paneled from floor to ceiling with old wood, and there was a big table in the middle, and a chest on one side of the fireplace.

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White and trembling, Temperance went across to the chest, and kneeling upon it slid her hands over the panels. Carefully and gently did she feel them; then she tapped them and listened intently. It seemed to her that Jeremy Twisden *must* have concealed his daughter in the secret hiding-place. Where else could she be? Becoming frightened lest she should be discovered in the parlor, she began to push and drag at the panels with all her strength; her strong fingers gripped the carved edges, her breath panted in her throat.

"Annis! Annis, are you there?" she whispered, and then she thought she heard a sound.

Yes, a very distant sound of some one knocking three times with precise regularity. Desperately Temperance looked around the room, and seeing a pair of heavy steel fire dogs upon the hearth she took one up, and began pounding away at the wall with it. She struck at several of the panels before she discovered the right one, and that split up unexpectedly, the steel dog remaining imbedded in it. As she could not move the andiron, Temperance forced her hands into the cavity it made, and back slipped the panel quite easily.

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"Annis!" she cried, looking down into a dark, cold hole.

Annis was standing at the bottom of some stone steps, and so dazed was she that Temperance was obliged to go down and pull her up into the parlor.

"Quick! you must run, Annis!" she said. "We have no time to lose."

"I am going—with my father—to America," whispered the girl.

"You are coming with me—to Andrada."

"Andrada?"

"Aye, Andrada. He has returned. Oh, come quickly, Annis, or they will throw me into prison for damaging your father's house. Are you well, sweet? Give me your hand."

Gripping her friend's hand, Temperance ran out of the house, away toward Winchelsea town. Once only did they speak on the way.

"Where are you taking me, Temperance?" gasped Annis.

"Sanctuary. The Church of Saint Thomas till I find Andrada."

Up the hill they went as if the devil were at their heels. Annis was heavy-footed, weary; her pale-gray gown was tumbled, her apron creased,

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and so bright was the May sunshine after the darkness of the cellar in which she had lived for over a week that her eyes streamed with tears and were full of fear. But Temperance was radiant. Her black hood hung down her back, her curling gold hair fell over her eyes, and she was triumphant. It would have been difficult to find in the length and breadth of England a more beautiful maiden than Temperance Farncombe, then in her seventeenth year.

On, on to the Church of Saint Thomas they ran, but as they approached they saw a great crowd gathered before the church, and there was much shouting and the noise of many clamoring voices. Temperance passed her hand over her eyes, for it seemed to her that she had seen it all before, and she wondered whether she were dreaming.

"What is it all about?" whispered Annis.

"'Tis the picture I saw in the black bowl," murmured Temperance. "See, there is the lady in the yellow gown and the brown cloak. Myrtilla!"

She cried the last word aloud, and Myrtilla Copplestone turned away from the soldier in

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the red coat to whom she was talking in an animated manner, and threw up her hands in joy.

"Hasteville, 'tis my friend Temperance Farncombe—the witch's maiden! And Annis! Sweet Annis, dear Annis, where have you come from? Now my happiness is complete. Hasteville, you know Annis well. Did she not put cheese and cakes under the hedge for the poor ape-man? Where is Sir Godfrey? Hi, there! Call Sir Godfrey Vane. Where is Sir Godfrey Vane? His betrothed is found. Make way! Make way!"

Imperiously she flung out her hand, and the crowd parted as she swept along with the two girls in her wake; then from a little open space before the church there stepped a man with dark and glossy curls hanging from beneath his fine hat, and one large pearl dangled from his left ear. Very fashionably clothed was he; his soft, wide leather boots were new, there were bars of gold embroidery on his dark crimson sleeves, a glittering order hung from his neck, and when he beheld Annis his somber face became radiant. Behind him, as he ran to meet her, there ambled a great dusty bear.

"Annis!" he cried. "Annis, is it true that I have found you? Dear heart, 'twas not here in

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the crowd that I meant to tell you my name, but because it has happened thus, forgive me for the deception I was obliged to play. Sweet Annis—where have you been?"

"Oh," she said in a little sobbing breath, "be Andrada! Be Andrada again. I cannot be the lady of Sir Godfrey Vane."

"Why not?" he asked, laughing. "To you I shall always be Andrada, I hope. Look—this is my twin brother, Hasteville, Myrtilla's betrothed whom you know so well. So distressed was he for my sake when you were spirited away that poor Myrtilla was most perplexed concerning him."

"Sweet sister Annis," smiled Colonel Hasteville Vane, taking her hand, "we are not strangers, for you alone were kind to the ape-man. Do you remember how Myrtilla swooned when she first caught sight of me? There was no means of telling her that I was here and in such a disguise."

"And you have cut your hair!"

It was the voice of Temperance Farncombe ringing out like a bell, and in a moment all was confusion. The crowd, which had been silent while Sir Godfrey Vane welcomed Annis, now

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burst forth with torrents of explanations, all anxious to relate a special little bit of knowledge, all eager to tell the great news. The King was coming home!

Aye, that was why Colonel Hasteville Vane was there; this desolate little spot was the meeting-place of the famous twin brothers, Godfrey and Hasteville Vane. Unceasingly they had worked in the King's cause, and now both had come to the trysting-place to meet a third friend—General Monk's private emissary, who had just arrived from London with the King's reply.

"Andrada, I find it difficult to understand," faltered Temperance. "Reply to what, and to whom?"

"The new Parliament asked Prince Charles to return," explained Sir Godfrey. "The whole country wants a king. I have tramped from cottage to cottage, from mansion to palace, listening and learning, while my brother Hasteville arranged and organized for the Prince. The Prince replied to the House of Commons by letter promising a general amnesty—forgiveness on both sides—and when this letter was read there went up such a cheer that I thought the very rafters would split for joy. But an hour ago Jas-

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per Coppelstone arrived from London to tell us that the King will return on his birthday, the twenty-ninth of May, and he bids me and my brother go back to London and make ready for him."

"And I go with them," said Mistress Myrtilla with decision. "Hasteville and I are to be wed here tomorrow morning at Saint Thomas's Church—it has been arranged with Parson Dixwell this many a day, but Jasper was so long in bringing us the date of the King's arrival, and our orders were not to do anything till that was settled. Hi! here is Mr. Jeremy Twisden! Now, Mr. Twisden, none of those black looks. Prince Charles is coming home, and we are all friends. You have done your duty; I have done mine. The Royalist weds the Roundhead and all is peace. Give Annis your blessing, Mr. Twisden."

But seeing how Jeremy Twisden stood sullenly there in the crowd, Mistress Myrtilla went up to him, and lowering her voice she continued in soothing tones:

"My good man, do you not see that it is a very excellent bargain? You should rejoice that he is not the peddler you thought him. I see great possibilities for your daughter. But with or with-

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out your blessing, it will be the same. If once Sir Godfrey Vane gets an idea into his head, no power on earth will prevent him from carrying it out. So give in with a good grace. 'Tis not every day that a nobleman weds a milkmaid with the consent of her future sister-in-law!"

"Oh, father, let me go in peace and not in anger," pleaded Annis, placing her hand timidly on his arm.

When Jeremy Twisden beheld Sir Godfrey Vane standing so proudly beside his daughter, and noticed the red mark still visible across his dark and handsome face, and the pearl in his ear, something changed within him. Aye, wedded to such a man, his daughter would have a fine position at court, and there was no knowing what her influence might be in the future, or how she might advance him, Jeremy Twisden. So grudgingly, a trifle uncouthly, he blessed the betrothed couple there in the shadow of Saint Thomas's and a great cheer went up from the crowd. Annis blushed—she could hardly speak for joy and amazement, and looked around for Temperance. But Temperance was with Mother Ursula. She had joined her on the edge of the crowd near "The Four Alls," and

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hanging on to her mistress' arm, the girl was talking, laughing, and weeping all in the same breath.

"We will go to London," she said. "Aye, I will see the King arrive even if I have to walk all the way. I *will* go—nothing shall prevent me. And you must come, too."

"If you go I must certainly come, and I am right tired of the marsh. But our positions will be changed methinks."

"How do you mean?"

"Maybe I shall come as your serving-woman, Temperance," and Mother Ursula gave a scornful little bow, but her hard face wrinkled up into a smile.

"I have no use for serving-women," laughed the girl. "They are more of a hindrance than anything else!"

"Then I will come because I am mighty partial to you, Temperance. Give me a little corner in your fine house, a few minutes of your busy days, and in return I will make you pomades to restore your complexion after the ravages of court life."

Temperance burst into a peal of laughter.

"My fine house—my days at court! If I see

the King at all 'twill be from the dust on the roadside. How shall we get to London, mistress, before the twenty-ninth of May?"

"There is *your* way," replied Mother Ursula, and she jerked her thumb over her shoulder.

Temperance turned her smiling face in the direction to which the stubborn old thumb pointed, and her eager eyes fell upon Jasper Copplestone. She knew he must be Jasper Copplestone, though she did not recognize his face, and she turned her gaze swiftly away and stood stiffly, proudly, making no sign. He was coming out of "The Four Alls" with his father. Tall and slender was he, and wearing a black coat of fine cloth, with an elegant lace collar at the neck, and stiff lace cuffs turned up like gauntlets from his hands, with gold tassels hanging from them. Yes, and one hand was gloved in black velvet with white stitching on it, and the other was bare and held a large, fluttering sheet of parchment. Temperance saw and remembered that beautiful smooth hand which had grasped the hank of wool across the table in the cottage, but she had not time to examine his face.

"He will pass me by—a beggar—a witch's maiden," she thought. "Never mind, the King

be—is coming home, and Myrtilla and Sir Godfrey will befriend me. And Annis will never blush for me.”

Aye, he had passed her by and was bowing before Annis, making some laughing remark to Sir Godfrey, and up came Mistress Myrtilla and talked to him with great vehemence. Temperance heard nothing, but she had time to observe Jasper Cottlestone. His elegance was very different from that of Sir Godfrey; there was no swagger about him, but a very stately presence had he, and a calm, clever face. The sapphire-blue sash of rich silk tied in a large bow on his hip was the only color in all his somber attire, and his broad-brimmed hat was almost flat in the crown, with a black feather tip at the side. But for all his stately ways, his eyes were restless; they peered hither and thither in the crowd, seeking something they could not find.

“He be very young to fill such a position of trust,” murmured Mother Ursula.

“Five years older than me—twenty-two,” said Temperance.

“The face of a statesman, a lawgiver,” nodded Mother Ursula.

“Well, be the crowd going to stand here all

day gaping and shouting? I am going home, mistress. Colonel Copplestone has gone sour with the doldrums. Look, he is all downcast."

It was while she was looking at the Colonel that a hand touched her arm, and she swung round to meet Jasper Copplestone's eyes.

"Do you know me, Temperance?" he asked, softly.

"Of a truth—the masked stranger!"

"Only the masked stranger? Not an old friend?"

"That I could not decide all of a sudden!"

"Had it not been for your help I should not be standing here now as the King's messenger. I kiss your hand in gratitude, bewitching maiden."

And before all the assembly Jasper Copplestone kissed the hand of the witch's serving maid, then led her to his friends, who were standing together near the church.

"A pledge!" he cried. "Friends—countryman—will you drink with me in the loving-cup? Dame Pepper, bring out your best loving-cup, and fill it with the choicest wine. Mistress Temperance Farncombe will give us a pledge."

"Me?" cried Temperance. "Oh no! Ask Myrtilla! Me in my rags and barefoot!"

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But Jasper had not seen her shabby clothes; he only perceived the beauty of her radiant face, the glory of her golden hair, and the joy in her steadfast brown eyes.

"Nay, Temperance, the honor is yours," cried Myrtilla. "Hi, there! Make way for the loving-cup!"

Before she could prevent him Sir Godfrey Vane had seized Temperance and placed her on the top of the old pillory near the church, and from there she looked down upon the crowd. Ah, there was Goody Pepper staggering under the weight of a great silver loving-cup, and the faces of all those she loved were turned up to her like flowers to the sun. Annis and Andrada, Myrtilla and Colonel Hasteville Vane, Mother Ursula, Jasper—aye, and where was the resentment and distrust which she had seen for so many years in the countenances of the people of Winchelsea? Had it gone with the coming of the King? Could they change their minds so soon? She could not think—she did not care. Soon she would be in London, where no one knew her as a witch's maiden! She laughed in an ecstasy of delight as she stooped to take the loving-cup from Jasper, and whispered to him

that, after all, she did remember him as an old friend.

"Friends!" she cried. "I give you the pledge. I have not spoken these words aloud for ten long years! God save King Charles the Second!"

As her lips touched the rim of the cup there arose such a cheer that it was hard to think that the King had ever had an enemy in Sussex. Again and again it rang out, echoing down to the town under the sea and up to the ruins of Farncombe Hall. Standing there above them all, with the great silver tankard in her hands, the witch's maiden wondered for a moment to whom she would pass it, then swiftly she bent and gave it to Jasper Coplestone. His fingers touched her hands, and so eager and adoring were his eyes that Temperance was filled with confusion.

"Long live King Charles the Second!" she cried yet again, but this time her voice was not quite steady.







